

## Sūrah 106: Quraysh

### Period of Revelation

A great majority of the commentators are agreed that it is Makki, and a manifest evidence of this are the words *Rabba hadhal-Bait* (Lord of this House) of this Sūrah itself.

### Historical Background

To understand the Sūrah well it is essential that one should keep the historical background relevant to the contents of this Sūrah and of Sūrah Al-Fil in view.

The tribe of Quraysh was scattered throughout Hijaz until the time of Qusayy bin Kilab, the ancestor of the Prophet. First of all, Qusayy gathered it in Makkah and this tribe was able to gain authority over the Ka'bāh. On that very basis Qusayy was called *mujammi* (unite, assembler) by his people. This man by his sagacity and wisdom founded a city state in Makkah and made excellent arrangements for the welfare of the pilgrims coming from all over Arabia, with the result that the Quraysh were able to gain great influence among the Arabian tribes and lands. After Qusayy the offices of the state of Makkah were divided between his sons, Abdi Manaf and Abd ad-Dar, but of the two Abdi Manaf gained greater fame even during his father's lifetime and was held in high esteem throughout Arabia. Abdi Manaf had four sons: Hashim, Abdi Shams, Al-Muttalib, and Naufal. Of these Hashim, father of Abdul Muttalib and grandfather of the Prophet, first conceived the idea to take part in the trade that passed between the eastern countries and Syria and Egypt through Arabia, and also to purchase the necessities of life for the Arabians so that the tribes living by the trade route bought these from them and the merchants living in the interior of the country were attracted to the market of Makkah. This was the time when the Sasanian kingdom of Persia had captured the international trade that was carried out between the northern lands and the eastern countries and Byzantine empire through the Persian Gulf. This had boosted up the trade activity on the trade route leading from southern Arabia to Syria and Egypt along the Red Sea coast. As against the other Arabian caravans, the Quraysh had the advantage that the tribes on the route held them in high esteem on account of their being keepers of the Ka'bāh. They stood indebted to them for the great generosity with which the Quraysh treated them in the Hajj season. That is why the Quraysh felt no fear that their caravans would be robbed or harmed any where on the way. The tribes on the way did not even charge them the heavy transit taxes that they demanded from the other caravans. Hashim taking advantage of this prepared the trade scheme and made his three brothers partners in it. Thus, Hashim obtained trade privileges from the Ghassanide king of Syria, Abdi Shams from the Negus, Al-Muttalib from the Yemeni nobles and Naufal from the governments of Iraq and Iran, and their trade began to flourish. That is how the four brothers became famous as traders and began to be called *ashab al-ilaf* (generators of love and affection) on account of their friendly relations with the tribes and states of the surrounding lands.

Because of their business relations with Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, Yemen and Abyssinia, the Quraysh came across such opportunities and their direct contact with the culture and civilization of different countries so enhanced the level of their knowledge and wisdom that no tribe in Arabia could match and equal them. As regards wealth and worldly goods they became the most affluent tribe, and Makkah became the most important commercial center of the Arabian peninsula. Another great advantage that accrued from these international relations was that they brought from Iraq the script which later was used for writing down the Qur'ān. No other Arabian tribe could boast of so many literate people as Quraysh. For these very reasons the Prophet said: "*Quraysh are the leaders of men.*" (Musnad Ahmad). And according to a hadith from Ali in Baihaqi, the Prophet said: "*First the leadership of the Arabians was in the hands of the people of Himyar, then God withdrew it from them and gave it to Quraysh.*"

The Quraysh were thus prospering and flourishing when the event of Abrahah's invasion of Makkah took place. Had Abrahah at that time succeeded in taking this Holy City and destroying the Ka'bāh, the glory and

renown of not only the Quraysh but of the Ka'bāh itself, would have faded away, the belief of the pre-Islāmic Arabia that the House indeed was God's House would have been shattered, and the high esteem in which Quraysh were held for being keepers of the House throughout the country would have been tarnished. Then, after the Abyssinian advance to Makkah, the Byzantium also would have taken the initiative to gain control over the trade route between Syria and Makkah: and the Quraysh would have been reduced to a plight worse than that in which they were involved before Qusayy bin Kilab. But when God showed this manifestation of His power that the swarms of birds destroyed 60,000 Abyssinian troops brought by Abraham by pelting them with stones, and from Makkah to Yemen they went on falling and dying by the wayside, the faith of the Arabs that the Ka'bāh indeed was God's House increased manifold, and the glory and renown of Quraysh too was enhanced considerably throughout the country. Now the Arabs were convinced that they were under God's special favor; therefore, they visited every part of Arabia fearlessly and passed through every land with their trade caravans unharmed. No one could dare touch them with an evil intention. Not to speak of touching them, even if they had a non-Quraysh under their protection, he too was allowed to pass unharmed.

### **Theme and Substance**

As all this was well known in the time of the Prophet's appointment to Prophethood, there was no need to mention them. That is why in the four brief sentences of this Sūrah, Quraysh were simply asked to consider: "When you yourselves acknowledge this House (i.e. the Ka'bāh) to be God's House, and not of the idols, and when you fully well know that it is God alone Who has granted you peace by virtue of this House, made your trade and commerce flourish and saving you from destitution favored you with prosperity, you should then worship and serve Him alone!"

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**Sūrah 106: Quraysh**<sup>1863</sup>

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

1. For the accustomed security of the Quraysh<sup>1864</sup> -
2. Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer<sup>1865</sup> -
3. Let them worship the Lord of this House,<sup>1866</sup>
4. Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.

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<sup>1863</sup> *Quraysh*: (The tribe of) Quraysh.

<sup>1864</sup> i.e., the honour and reputation God had given them as guardians of the Holy *Ka'bah*, which allowed them to travel without fear of being harmed.

<sup>1865</sup> i.e., the trading caravans that travelled south in winter and north in summer.

<sup>1866</sup> i.e., the *Ka'bah*.