

### Sūrah 113 and 114: al-Falaq and an-Nās

Although these two Sūrahs of the Qur'ān are separate entities and are written in the Mushaf also under separate names, yet they are so deeply related mutually and their contents so closely resemble each other's that they have been designated by a common name *Mu'awwidhatayn* (the two Sūrahs in which refuge with God has been sought). Imām Baihaqī in *Dala'il an-Nubuwwat* has written that these Sūrahs were revealed together, that is why the combined name of both is *Mu'awwidhatayn*. We are writing the same one Introduction to both, for they discuss and deal with just the same matters and topics. However, they will be explained and commented on separately below.

#### Period of Revelation

Hasan Basri, 'Ikrimah, 'Ata and Jabir bin Zayd say that these Sūrahs are Makki. A tradition from 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas also supports the same view. However, according to another tradition from him, it is Madani and the same view is held also by 'Abdullah bin Zubair and Qatadah. One of the traditions which strengthens this second view is the Hadith which Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal have related on the authority of 'Uqbah bin 'Amir. He says that the Prophet one day said to him: "Do you know what kind of verses have been revealed to me tonight? - these matchless verses are *A'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *A'udhu bi-Rabbil-nas* (i.e. these two Sūrahs). This Hadith is used as an argument for these Sūrahs to be Madani because 'Uqbah bin 'Amir had become a Muslim in Madinah after the Hijrah (migration). Other traditions which have lent strength to this view are those related by Ibn Sa'd, Baghawi, Imām Baihaqī, Ibn Hajar and others to the effect that these Sūrahs were revealed when the Jews had worked magic on the Prophet in Madinah and he had fallen ill under its effect.

But as we have explained in the Introduction to Sūrah Al-Ikhlās, when it is said about a certain Sūrah or verse that it was revealed on this or that particular occasion, it does not necessarily mean that it was revealed for the first time on that very occasion. Rather it sometimes so happened that a Sūrah or a verse had previously been revealed, then on the occurrence or appearance of a particular incident or situation, the Prophet's attention was drawn to it by God for the second time, or even again and again. In our opinion the same also was the case with the *Mu'awwidhatayn*. The subject matter of these Sūrahs is explicit that these were sent down at Makkah in the first instance when opposition to the Prophet there had grown very intense. Later, when at Madinah storms of opposition were raised by the hypocrites, Jews and polytheists, the Prophet was instructed to recite these very Sūrahs, as has been mentioned in the above cited tradition from Uqbah bin Amir. After this, when magic was worked on him, and his illness grew intense, Gabriel came and instructed him by God's command to recite these very Sūrahs. Therefore, in our opinion, the view held by the commentators who describe both these Sūrahs as Makki is more reliable. Regarding them as connected exclusively with the incident of magic is difficult, for to this incident related only one verse (v.4), the remaining verses of Sūrah al Falaq and the whole of Sūrah An-Nas have nothing to do with it directly.

#### Theme and Subject-Matter

The conditions under which these two Sūrahs were sent down in Makkah were as follows. As soon as the Prophet began to preach the message of Islām, it seemed as though he had provoked all classes of the people around him. As his message spread the opposition of the disbelieving Quraysh also became more and more intense. As long as they had any hope that they would be able to prevent him from preaching his message by throwing some temptation in his way, or striking some bargain with him, their hostility did not become very active. But when the Prophet disappointed them completely that he would not effect any kind of compromise with them in the matter of faith, and in Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn they were plainly told: "I do not worship those who you worship nor are you worshipers of Him Whom I worship. For you is your religion and for me is mine," the hostility touched its extreme limits. More particularly, the families whose members (men or women, boys or girls) had accepted Islām, were burning with rage from within against the Prophet. They were cursing him, holding secret consultations to kill him quietly in the dark of the night so that the Banu

Hashim could not discover the murderer and take revenge; magic and charms were being worked on him so as to cause his death, or make him fall ill, or become mad; satans from among the men and the Jinn spread on every side so as to whisper one or another evil into the hearts of the people against him and the Qurʾān brought by him so that they became suspicious of him and fled him. There were many people who were burning with jealousy against him, for they could not tolerate that a man from another family or clan than their own should flourish and become prominent. For instance, the reason why Abu Jahl was crossing every limit in his hostility to him has been explained by himself: “We and the Bani Abdi Manaf (to which the Prophet belonged) were rivals of each other: they fed others, we too fed others; they provided conveyances to the people, we too did the same; they gave donations, we too gave donations, so much so that when they and we have become equal in honour and nobility, they now proclaim that they have a Prophet who is inspired from the heaven; how can we compete with them in this field? By God, we will never acknowledge him, nor affirm faith in him.” (Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 337-338)

Such were the conditions when the Prophet was commanded to tell the people: “I seek refuge with the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of everything that He has created, and from the evil of the darkness of night and from the evil of magicians, men and women, and from the evil of the envious,” and to tell them: “I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, and the Deity of mankind, from the evil of the whisperer, who returns over and over again, who whispers (evil) into the hearts of men, whether he be from among the Jinn or men.” This is similar to what the Prophet Moses had been told to say when Pharaoh had expressed his design before his full court to kill him: “I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning.” (al-Muʾmin: 27) And: “I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should assail me.” (ad-Dukhān: 20)

On both occasions these illustrious Prophets of God were confronted with well-equipped, resourceful and powerful enemies. On both occasions they stood firm on their message of Truth against their strong opponents, whereas they had no material power on the strength of which they could fight them, and on both occasions they utterly disregarded the threats and dangerous plans and hostile devices of the enemy, saying: “We have taken refuge with the Lord of the universe against you.” Obviously, such firmness and steadfastness can be shown only by the person who has the conviction that the power of His Lord is the supreme power, that all powers of the world are insignificant against Him, and that no one can harm the one who has taken His refuge. Only such a one can say: “I will not give up preaching the Word of Truth. I care the least for what you may say or do, for I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord and Lord of all universe.”

### **Relation between Sūrah Al-Fātihah and the Muʾawwidhatayn**

The last thing which is noteworthy with regard to the Muʾawwidhatayn is the relation between the beginning and the end of the Qurʾān. Although the Qurʾān has not been arranged chronologically, the Prophet arranged in the present order the verses and Sūrahs revealed during 23 years on different occasions to meet different needs and situations not by himself but by the command of God Who revealed them. According to this order, the Qurʾān opens with the Sūrah Al-Fātihah and ends with the Muʾawwidhatayn. Now, let us have a look at the two. In the beginning, after praising and glorifying God, Who is Lord of the worlds, Kind, Merciful and Master of the Judgment Day, the servant submits: “Lord, You alone I worship and to You alone I turn for help, and the most urgent help that I need from You is to be guided to the Straight Way.” In answer, he is given by God the whole Qurʾān to show him the Straight Way, which is concluded thus: Man prays to God, Who is Lord of dawn, Lord of men, King of men, Deity of men, saying: “I seek refuge only with You for protection from every evil and mischief of every creature, and in particular, from the evil whisperings of devils, be they from among men or Jinn, for they are the greatest obstacle in following the Straight Way.” The relation that the beginning bears with the end, cannot remain hidden from anyone who has understanding and insight.

**Sūrah 113: al-Falaq**<sup>1880</sup>

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

1. Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of day-break
2. From the evil of that which He created
3. And from the evil of darkness when it settles
4. And from the evil of the blowers in knots<sup>1881</sup>
5. And from the evil of an envier when he envies."

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<sup>1880</sup> *Al-Falaq*: Daybreak. This and the following *sūrah* were revealed together and are recited when seeking God's protection from all kinds of evil.

<sup>1881</sup> i.e., those who practice magic.

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**Sūrah 114: an-Nās**<sup>1882</sup>

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

1. Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,
2. The Sovereign of mankind,
3. The God of mankind,
4. From the evil of the retreating whisperer<sup>1883</sup> -
5. Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind -
6. From among the jinn and mankind."<sup>1884</sup>

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<sup>1882</sup> *An-Nās*: People or Mankind.

<sup>1883</sup> i.e., a devil who makes evil suggestions to man but disappears when one remembers God.

<sup>1884</sup> Evil prompters may be from men as well as from *jinn*.