

Al-Imran

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction, most of the surahs of the Holy *Qur'an* form pairs, surah *Al-Imran* also forms a pair with *Al-Baqarah* since they discuss the same group of subjects and they have a lot of similarities between them. The Prophet (SAW) even named them الزَّهْرَاوَانِ “*The two most Shining lights*” in a hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Buraydah from his father that the Prophet (SAW) said :

تَعَلَّمُوا سُورَةَ الْبَقَرَةِ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ فَإِنَّهُمَا الزَّهْرَاوَانِ، يُظِلُّانِ صَاحِبَيْهِمَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
كَأَنَّهُمَا غَمَامَتَانِ أَوْ غَيَّائَتَانِ أَوْ فِرْقَانِ مِنْ طَيْرٍ صَوَافٍ

“Learn Surah *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Imran* because they are two lights and they shade their people on the Day of Resurrection, just as two clouds, two spaces of shade or two lines of (flying) birds.”¹

Al-Imran like *Al-Baqarah* was revealed in *Madinah*. It contains two hundred *ayat* and twenty *rukus* which are divisible into two parts with ten *rukus* in each part. The first part is further divisible into three sections with the middle section addressing the People of the Book. In the middle section of surah *Al-Baqarah*, Allah (SWT) addresses the *Jews*, whereas in this surah the main address is to the *Christians* who are admonished to give up their erroneous beliefs and accept the guidance of the *Qur'an*. There is a difference of more than a year between the revelation of *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Imran*. Most of this surah was revealed after the *battle of Uhad* while surah *Al-Baqarah* was revealed before the *battle of Badr*. The events of the *battle of Uhad* are described and commented upon in the last part of this surah.

(1) “*Alif, Lam, Mim*” This surah like *Al-Baqarah* also begins with words which are known as *huruf al-muqatta'at*. Its description has already been commented upon in the beginning of surah *Al-Baqarah*.

(2) “*Allah (SWT)! there is no Allah (SWT) but He the Living the Eternal*” This *ayah* too has already been described in the commentary of *Ayat Al-Kursi* in *Al-Baqarah*. It

states that there is none worthy of worship except Allah (SWT) and He is *Al Hayy* and *Al-Qayyum*, the Ever Living, the One who never dies, who sustains and protects all that exists. He Himself is independent and self-sufficient and all the Creation stands in need of Him and totally relies on Him.

(3) *"It is He Who has sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Injeel"* This means that Allah (SWT) has sent down this Book i.e. the *Qur'an* to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with truth and with *Haq* i.e. with a true purpose, and it has come confirming the truth of those scriptures which were present before *Qur'an* was revealed, and it also confirms the truth that Allah (SWT) himself has sent down *Torah* and *Injeel* to his Prophets Moses (AS) and Jesus (AS) respectively.

(4) *"Before this, as a guide to mankind"* i.e. Allah (SWT) sent down the previous scriptures before this *Qur'an* as a guidance for mankind *"and He sent down Al-Furqan"* i.e. the criterion to differentiate between falsehood and the truth, deviation and the guidance. It is the distinction between misguidance and deviation on the one hand, and truth and piety on the other hand. *"Surely those who reject Allah's revelations will be sternly punished"* Whoever denies and rejects His revelations, he will be punished severely on the *Day of Resurrection*. And remember that *"Allah is Mighty, capable of retribution"* i.e. His sovereignty is Infinite, and He is Omnipotent, All-Powerful to take revenge.

(5) *"From Allah (SWT), verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens."* i.e. Allah (SWT) has perfect knowledge of the whole universe and nothing in it is hidden from His watchful gaze and observation.

(6) *"it is He Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases."* i.e. it is Allah (SWT) Who has been providing you with all your needs through out your whole life, even when you were in the wombs and He creates you as He wills, whether male or female, black or white, wealthy or poor. Further Allah (SWT) says: *"There is no Allah but He, the Exalted in might, the Wise"* This *ayah* reiterates the central theme of the *Qur'an* i.e. *Tawhid*; that none has the right to be worshipped except Him and no one is to be obeyed independent of Him. And He is '*Al Aziz*', who has the total

authority and He does whatever He likes. He is also 'Al Hakeem', i.e. alongwith having total authority and power, He is also All-Wise. This *ayah* is an introduction to the birth of Jesus (AS), narrated in the subsequent *Ayat*. He is a created servant of Allah (SWT), just as He created the rest of mankind, so how is it possible that he is divine when he is one of His creations.

(7) "He is the One Who has revealed to you the Book. Some of its verses are entirely clear - they are the foundation of the Book - while others are allegorical" This *ayah* is very important to the understanding of the *Qur'an*. There are *ayat* that are *muhkamaat*; they are absolutely clear and precise in their meaning and connotation and are the foundation of the whole *Qur'an*. They are the basis of the law (*Shari'a*) given by Allah (SWT) and they are plain and simple for everyone to comprehend and follow. *Shari'a* Law actually rests on *muhkamaat*, that are fortified and absolutely self evident and there is no doubt in their meaning or understanding. On the other hand there are *ayat* that are *mutashabihat*, they are allegorical which fall in the category of *Al-ghaib*, for which only Allah (SWT) has the knowledge e.g. the angels, the Hereafter, paradise and hell, the heavens and the *Day of Judgment*. Hence, to describe those things which are beyond the reach of human perception Allah (SWT) has used metaphors, similes and allegories. And Allah (SWT) says: "Those whose hearts are infected with disbelief follow the allegorical part to mislead others and to give it their own interpretation, seeking for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah (SWT)" There can be difference in the interpretation of *ayat* that are *mutashabihat* because they are allegories and hence those who are misguided and deviants from truth try to make false interpretations of these *ayat*, so they could misguide people in the search of *Al-ghaib*, which only Allah (SWT) knows. Whereas, the exact meaning and interpretation of these *ayat* is far from the reach of human understanding. "Those who are well grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; it is all from our Lord." On the other hand, those who have been endowed with deep knowledge abstain from the ambiguities of these *ayat* and they believe in the word of Allah (SWT) in their obvious meaning without probing much into them and they believe that only Allah (SWT) has the perfect knowledge of these *ayat*. There is a saying in Persian:

"In the end most of the learned people they are forced to say that now I know that I know nothing." i.e. we must understand the limitations of human mind instead of probing into hair-splitting distinctions ultimately leading to dissension.

In surah *Al-Baqarah* the first condition given for a believer to benefit from the guidance of the *Qur'an* is to believe in the *Unseen*; the reality which is beyond the range of human perception, and to believe that it belongs to another world which is hidden from us and thus cannot be apprehended with the limited means and little intellect that we have in the terrestrial existence. That is why Allah (SWT) says: *"None will take heed except the people of understanding."* Only the really and genuinely wise take heed.

(8) *"They say: "Our Lord, Do not cause our hearts to deviate now after you have guided us. Grant us Your own mercy"* This is the prayer of those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. The aim and purpose of their lives in this world, a temporary and transient abode, is to make preparation for the eternal life of the Hereafter. So they pray to Allah (SWT) not to make their hearts deviate like those who follow their own desires and bestow mercy on them and make their hearts firm. And they say: *"Truly, You are the Bestower"* i.e. it is only You who can guide us. You are the munificent Giver, the Al-bestower.

(9) *"Our Lord, You will surely gather all mankind before You on the Day about which there is no doubt; surely Allah (SWT) never fails to fulfill His promise."* i.e. They are sure of their eventual return to Allah (SWT) when all disputes will be resolved and all realities will appear in full. Allah will surely gather all mankind before Him on a day that will indubitably come and He will not break his promise.

(10) *"Those who reject faith neither their possessions nor their progeny will avail them aught against Allah (SWT): they are themselves but fuel for the fire."* This means that those who deviate from the truth and deny what Allah (SWT) has revealed to His Prophet (SAW), neither their progeny nor their wealth will avail them anything when they will be questioned by Allah (SWT) on the *Day of Judgment* and they will be the wood with which the Hellfire will be kindled. Those who disbelieve, neither their riches nor their children shall in the least save them from Allah's punishment.

(11) *"(Their end will be) no better than that of the people of Pharaoh and their predecessors: they denied Our Signs and Allah (SWT) called them to account for their sins."* i.e. the disbelievers will not benefit from their wealth and progeny and will meet the same end that the followers of Pharaoh and the previous nations met. They rejected Allah's (SWT) signs and His Messengers, thus He will punish them on the Day of Judgment with the severest of punishments. *"For Allah (SWT) is strict in punishment."* Verily Allah (SWT) is stern in retribution.

(12) *"Say to the unbelievers: "Soon you will be overpowered and driven together to Hell, which is a horrible refuge"* Allah (SWT) commanded the Prophet (SAW) to proclaim to the disbelievers who rejected his prophethood, that they will be defeated and will be overpowered in this world and in the Hereafter they will be driven towards the Hellfire which is indeed a horrible resting-place.

(13) *"Indeed there was a sign for you in the two armies which met on the battlefield: one was fighting for the cause of Allah and another disbelieving; whom they saw with their own eyes as twice their number."* This refers to the battle of *Badr* which had recently taken place before the revelation of this *ayah*. On the battlefield the unbelievers exceeded the believers far more in number and in power. Three hundred and thirteen Muslims were set to fight one thousand strong *Quraysh* army, more than thrice their number, but by Allah's will, the army of the believers, fighting in the way of Allah (SWT) saw the disbelieving army as twice their number, so that they would trust in Allah (SWT) and seek His help. *"But Allah (SWT) strengthens with His own aid whom He pleases. Surely there is a lesson in this for those who have eyes"* i.e. this is a clear proof for the unbelievers that Allah (SWT) is always on the side of the believers and a clear sign for them to see how they are placed in this world and what fate awaits them in the Hereafter. Allah (SWT) strengthens with His aid whom He wills. Surely in that there is a lesson for the discerning.

(14) *"Alluring unto men is the enjoyment of the worldly desires through women, children and heaped-up hoards of gold and silver, and branded horses, and cattle, and fertile land. These are the pleasures of this world, but the most beautiful of goals is with Allah"* Allah (SWT) has

made this world a place of trial and has placed delights and pleasures in it as a test for the mankind. These ephemeral worldly things make a person oblivious of the realities pertaining to the next life and he no longer remembers the fact that the most excellent reward is with Allah (SWT) which is far better than all passing delights of this short life.

(15) *"Say : "Shall I tell you of better things than these. For the righteous there will be gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they will live forever with purified spouses and the good pleasure of Allah (SWT)."*" i.e. These worldly things which allure you are only the glitters of this present life and they will not be of any use in the next life. But those who make the Hereafter their center of attention and are desirous of the next life instead of these earthly delights, Allah (SWT) informs them of great rewards in the Hereafter. They will have gardens with rivers flowing and spouses freed from impurity and they will receive the grace of their Lord, which is indeed the most supreme bliss conceivable. And know that, *"Allah (SWT) is seeing His servants very closely."* Allah (SWT) is watching over his servants.

(16) *"Those who pray: "Our Lord! We have indeed believed in You, so forgive our sins and save us from the agony of the Hellfire"*" The believers further supplicate to their Lord to forgive their sins and faults and save them from the Hellfire with His bounty and mercy.

(17) *"The patient, the true believers, the obedient and those who spend, and who pray for forgiveness in the last hours of the night"* Allah (SWT) mentions the qualities of true believers who are steadfast in avoiding prohibitions and obedient in worshipping Allah (SWT). They spend in His cause and seek Allah's forgiveness in the last part of the night. They are patient, sincere, obedient, and charitable; and implore forgiveness in the early morning hours.

(18) *"Allah bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but He and so do the angels and those who are well grounded in knowledge standing firm on justice. None has the right to be worshipped except He, the All-Mighty, the Wise"* Allah (SWT) gives the testimony Himself that He alone is the Lord of the universe and there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. Then He mentions the testimonies of the angels and all

those people who have been bestowed with knowledge, they all bear witness that Allah (SWT) alone is the Master and Creator of the whole universe. And He is All-Mighty and Wise in all His commandments and decrees.

(19) *"Surely the only Deen in the sight of Allah is Al-Islam"*. If we refer to the Arabic language dictionaries to know how the Arabs used to understand the word *Deen*, when *Qur'an* was being revealed, we realize that it is wrong to translate it in English with the word *religion*. The word *Deen* is used in the Arabic language for quite wider meanings e.g. subjugation, authority and ruling, obedience and submission, modes of worship and devotional practices etc. All these meanings constitute the holistic concept of *Deen* in the *Qur'an* where it implies a comprehensive system of life in which total authority belongs to Allah (SWT). Therefore, we can summarize that *Deen* is submission, following and worship by man of the creator, the ruler, the subjugator in a comprehensive system of life with all its beliefs: intellectual, moral and political aspects included.

Allah (SWT) states in this *ayah* that the only *Deen* acceptable to Him is Islam i.e. the system of life given to us by Allah (SWT). Further He says: *"Those to whom the Book was given did not adopt ways different than this except out of envy among themselves, and after the true knowledge had come to them"* i.e. Although they were given the divine Books which taught only Islam to them but some of them differed among themselves out of envy and because of the urge to dominate each other. So they distorted their beliefs and practices of the true faith and made it subservient to their own desires. Then Allah (SWT) said *"They should know that Allah is swift in calling to account those who deny His revelations"* i.e. Allah (SWT) will punish those who reject His *Ayat* and *He is swift in reckoning*.

(20) *"So if they argue with you, say: "I have submitted my whole self to Allah (SWT) and so have those who follow me." Then ask those who are given the Book and those who are illiterates: "Will you also submit yourselves to Allah (SWT)?"* Allah (SWT) commanded His Messenger (SAW) to ask the people of the Book and the disbelievers that I and my followers have submitted to the true *Deen* of Allah (SWT), so will you also give up all the innovations and return to the true *Deen*. Then Allah (SWT) says: *"If they do they shall be rightly guided but if they turn back, then your duty is only to convey the Message"* i.e. it is not the responsibility of the Messenger to forcefully guide anyone, rather

his duty is only to convey the message and it is Allah (SWT) who guides whom He wills and allows whom He wills to stray. And *"Allah (SWT) is watching all His servants very closely"* i.e. He has perfect knowledge of everything and He knows those who are guided and those who stray from the true *Deen*.

(21) *"Warn those who deny Allah's revelations, slay the Prophets without any justification, and kill those from among the people who enjoin justice about the news of a painful punishment"* This *ayah* refers to the People of the book who were asked to acknowledge the Book of Allah (SWT) i.e. the Quran as the final authority and follow His Messengers but they denied His *ayat* and His Messengers due to their deviance and refusal to follow them. This *ayah* also shows the rebellious attitude of the *Jews* towards their prophets and the righteous people who enjoin justice and they killed them because of what they preached to them. Allah (SWT) condemns them for their behavior and gives them the news of a painful and humiliating punishment.

(22) *"They are the ones whose deeds will become void in this world and in the Hereafter"* Those who denied Allah's revelations and killed His Messengers, then their works will bear no fruit for them and it will only bring them ruin in this world and in the next. *"and they will have no helpers"* i.e. no one will be able to save them against the punishment of Allah (SWT).

(23) *"Have you not seen the behavior of those who have been given a portion of the Book? When they are invited to settle their disputes according to the Book of Allah, some of them turn back and decline"* This refers to the *Jews* and the *Christians* who were given a portion of the *Book*. Allah's revelations as a whole throughout the ages is *Al-Kitab* (the Book) and *Torah* given to Moses (AS) and *Injeel* given to Jesus (AS) are portions from that *Book*. Now when they are invited to the final revelation of Allah (SWT) and to follow His Last Messenger (SAW) accepting whatever the Book judges to be right and rejecting whatever it judges to be wrong, they turn their backs away and pay no heed.

(24) *"This is because they say: "The fire of Hell shall not touch us, but for a few days." And they are deceived in their religion by their own self-invented beliefs"* i.e. As mentioned earlier in

ayah 80 of *Al-Baqarah* the *Jews* believed that the fire of hell will not touch them except for a few days, and then they will be saved from it. They say it will only touch them for forty days then they will enter the *Paradise*, just by virtue of being *Jews*. They forged this belief which made them so bold and arrogant that they committed the gravest and most heinous crimes fearlessly. But Allah (SWT) says, they deceive themselves because of their self-invented lies which take them away from the right path.

(25) *"How (will it be) when We gather them together on the Day about which there is no doubt, when every soul will be given what it has earned"* i.e. Allah (SWT) warns the *Jews* and the *Christians* to ponder on what will be their condition on the *Day of Judgment*, when they have defied Allah's commandments and killed His prophets. He will surely gather them on that day and will punish them because of their faults and what they invented in their religion. *"And they will not be wronged"* i.e. this punishment will only be because of their own evil deeds that they used to do in this world.

(26) *"Say: "O Allah! Lord of all dominion! You give dominion to whom You will and take away dominion from whom You will; You give honor to whom You will and You humiliate whom You will; in Your hand is all good"* This means that Allah (SWT) is the sole authority and Master of all kingship. Every thing submits to the authority of the master of the universe, the absolute sovereign. All things in the universe have been created by Him and He gives a portion of this authority, power and wealth to whomsoever He wills as He chose Muhammad's Ummah and gave them dominance over all other religions. Similarly, He humiliates whomsoever He wills because He knows who is not deserving of His honor and power. And *"Surely You have power over everything"* i.e. Allah (SWT) is able to do whatever He wills. He exalts whomever He wills and abases whomever He pleases. He (SWT) has power over all things.

(27) *"You cause the night to pass into the day and You cause the day to pass into the night"* i.e. Allah (SWT) merges night into day and day into night i.e. Allah is the agent behind the alternation of day and night. But if they are viewed as symbols then light or day would mean knowledge and night ignorance. And *"You draw the living*

from the dead and You draw the dead from the living” i.e. the living are those who have attained to faith and follow the right path, whereas the dead are those who disbelieve in Allah’s commandments and thus are spiritually blind. And “and You provide sustenance for anyone You wish without measure.” i.e. He provides to anyone who supplicates to Him without measure. He gives without stint to whom He wills.

(28) *“Let not the believers make unbelievers their protectors rather than the believers; anyone who does so will have nothing to hope for from Allah - except if you do so as a precaution to guard yourselves against their tyranny. Allah warns you to fear Him: because with Allah is your final refuge”* In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) prohibits the Muslims not to take the disbelievers as their friends and protectors instead of the believers. And whosoever commits such acts then Allah (SWT) will never bestow His mercy upon them nor will He help them in this world and in the Hereafter. But if the believers are afraid of tyranny from their enemies then it is allowed to conceal their faith and they can show friendship to them outwardly only to save their life but inwardly a believer should only befriend a Muslim and take Allah (SWT) as his helper and protector. And Allah (SWT) warns you to fear Him, and bear in mind that towards Him is your final return.

(29) *“Say: “Whether you conceal what is in your heart or reveal it, it is known to Allah. He knows whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is in the Earth” i.e. nothing is hidden from Allah (SWT). He knows that which is in the heavens and in the earth and He is also aware of what we conceal and what we disclose. He even knows the intentions and thoughts of a person whether he reveals them or hides them. And “Allah has full power over everything” i.e. His ability encompasses everything.*

(30) *“On the Day of Judgment, when every soul will be confronted with whatever good it has done - as for its evil deeds, it will wish they were a long way off. Allah warns you to have His fear. Allah is full of kindness for His devotees” i.e. Every soul will be paid back in full what it has earned in this world. Those who devoted themselves in Allah's (SWT) worship and obedience will get their reward from Him on the Day of Judgment. But those who are evil doers, will be in a state of terror when they see their evil*

deeds in front of them and that day they will wish that there should be an immense distance between them and the evil deeds they have been committing in this world. Allah admonishes us to fear Him. He is compassionate towards his servants.

Foot Notes

[1] Musnad Ahmed 5:352 , Also recorded by Ibn Majah 2:1242