



CHAPTER 96

Al-‘Alaq: The Clot

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 19 verses)

The first five verses of this chapter are by universal admission the first revelation which the Holy Prophet received. The chapter is called *The Clot* because of the statement made in the second verse that Allāh created man from *a clot* of blood, which contains a hint that, as a beautiful human form is evolved out of such a humble origin, even so the Holy Prophet would raise humanity to the greatest eminence morally and spiritually.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

1 Read in the name of thy Lord Who
creates^a —

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝

2 Creates man from a clot,^a

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝

1a. The Arabs were an *ummī* people, a people who made no use of reading and writing, with very rare exceptions, and the Prophet himself did not know reading or writing, yet the very first revelation which he received from on High was a command *to read*. The significance of this order is expressed in v. 3, v. 2 being parenthetical as referring to the origin of man. The order to *read* is repeated in v. 3 with the addition of the words that thy Lord is most Generous, to show that it is through reading and writing that man can attain to a position of glory, while v. 4 says that it is by the use of the pen that knowledge can be acquired. The words in *the name of thy Lord* signify *by the help of thy Lord*. The use of the word *Rabb* (*Nourisher unto perfection*) is to show that revelation was being granted to the Prophet, to bring him, and through him the whole of humanity, to perfection. The circumstances attending this first revelation are met with in trustworthy reports, and from these it appears that the Holy Prophet's first reply to the angel who brought this message was that *he was unable to read* (B. 1:1).

2a. *‘Alaq* signifies *a clot of blood* as well as *attachment and love* (T, LL). The former significance is the one generally adopted, because of the mention of *‘alaqah* in the process of the creation of man in other places in the Holy Qur’ān, and it indicates the insignificance of man's origin. Having regard to the other significance of *‘alaq*, the words may, however, also be translated as meaning *created man out of love*. The Prophet is reported to have said: *I (God) loved that I should be known, so I created man*.

- 3 Read and thy Lord is most Generous,^a اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْكَرِيمُ ۞
- 4 Who taught by the pen,^a الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۞
- 5 Taught man what he knew not. عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۞
- 6 Nay, man is surely inordinate, كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَبِغْطَىٰ ۞
- 7 Because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient.^a أَنْ سَرَّاهُ اسْتَعْتَبَىٰ ۞
- 8 Surely to thy Lord is the return. إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ ۞
- 9 Hast thou seen him who forbids أَسْرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَىٰ ۞
- 10 A servant when he prays?^a عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰ ۞
- 11 Seest thou if he is on the right way, أَسْرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ ۞
- 12 Or enjoins observance of duty? أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ ۞
- 13 Seest thou if he denies and turns away? أَسْرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ۞
- 14 Knows he not that Allāh sees? أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ۞
- 15 Nay, if he desist not, We will seize him by the forelock^a — كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ۞

3a. *Akram* and *Karīm* (from *karuma*, it was highly esteemed or excellent or valuable) mean *Generous* as well as *Honourable* (LL). This word has been used here in reference to the great goal of honour and glory which the Prophet was destined to attain.

4a. The mention of the *pen* in this, the very first, revelation of the Holy Prophet, is significant, and it not only indicates, as Rodwell says, “the powerful help for propagating the knowledge of the Divine Unity” which the Holy Prophet was to find in the *pen*, but signifies as well that the pen should be specially used in guarding the revelation which was to be granted to the Holy Prophet. It is a fact that the pen has played an important part in the propagation of Islām as well as in the protection of the Qur’ān against corruption of every sort. The frequent mention of writing and the pen in the Holy Qur’ān, and particularly in connection with the revelation of the Holy Prophet, is rather striking when it is borne in mind that not only was the use of writing a rare novelty in the Arabian peninsula, but the Prophet was himself unacquainted with writing and reading.

7a. Some reports apply the words from here to the end of this chapter to Abū Jahl, but the words are general. In fact, we are told here that man becomes inordinate or rebellious because he thinks himself to be self-sufficient, and free from all need of God Who breathed into him of His Spirit. The soul of man has in fact a mystic relation with the invisible Divine Spirit, which the materialist fails to realize.

10a. There is special reference in the indefinite form to the Holy Prophet. So great was the opposition that the Prophet and his companions could not say their prayers in a public place.

15a. Seizing by the forelock signifies *abasement*. In the battle of Badr — thirteen years after this — these opponents were actually abased.

16 A lying, sinful forelock!

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

17 Then let him summon his council,

فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ ﴿١٧﴾

18 We will summon the braves of the army.^a

سَنَدْعُ الرِّبَاطِيَّةَ ﴿١٨﴾

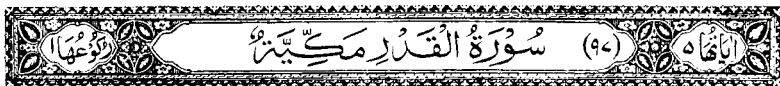
19 Nay! Obey him not, but prostrate thyself, and draw nigh (to Allāh).^a

Prostration

كَلَّا لَا تَطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ﴿١٩﴾

18a. *Al-nādī* signifies *al-majlis* or *the council*. The *dār al-Nadwah* (from the same root *nadā*) was the great council-hall of the nation, where the chief men assembled together in consultation over matters of importance relating to the whole of the nation, the undertaking of wars, etc. The significance therefore is that they should take their decision unitedly and do their utmost against the Prophet and his message. The *zabāniyah* “with the Arabs of the classical age” signifies the *shurāṭ* (LL, so also Kf, Bd, Rz), “applied in the earlier sense of *the braves of an army*, or in the later sense of *the armed attendants of the prefect of police*. This is the primary significance” (LL). The two verses thus clearly speak of the battles in which the mighty men of both sides were to be brought into conflict.

19a. The recital of this verse is followed by an actual prostration; see 7:206a



CHAPTER 97

Al-Qadr: The Majesty

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 5 verses)

The very first revelation of the Holy Qur'ān contained in the last chapter is suitably followed in arrangement by one that relates when the revelation of the Qur'ān began. It was the *Night of Majesty* (one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramaḍān), which first witnessed the shining of that light which was destined to illumine the whole world. And the coming of the first revelation on the Night of *Majesty*, which gives its name to this chapter, contained a clear indication that the most majestic of all revelations was now being granted to the world, and that the majesty of this revelation, as well as of its recipient, would be established in the world. The chapter is unquestionably one the very earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 Surely We revealed it on the Night
of Majesty^a —

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

1a. *Lailat al-Qadr*, literally *the Night of Majesty* or *Grandeur* or *Greatness*, is a well-known night in the last ten days of the month of Ramaḍān, being more probably the 25th or 27th or 29th night of the month. In 44:3 it is called *the blessed night*. From 2:185, it appears that the Holy Qur'ān was revealed in the month of Ramaḍān, and from the above it appears to have been revealed on the *lailat al-Qadr*; by revelation of course being meant the commencement of its revelation, because the whole was revealed in portions during twenty-three years; and the word "Qur'ān" is applicable as well to a portion as to the whole. That the reference is here to the commencement of the revelation is also clear from the arrangement of the chapters, the opening verses of the last chapter being admittedly the first revelation to the Prophet. In fact, *lailat al-Qadr* owes its importance to the fact it was on this night that the most blessed and perfect of all revelations was vouchsafed to the world. Moses' fasting for forty days previous to the receipt of revelation (Exod. 24:18), and Jesus' keeping fast for the same number of days before he was called upon to undertake the office of prophethood (Matt. 4:2), show that Divine blessings are associated with fasting in sacred history. Hence the Muslims are required to fast every year for thirty days, and special Divine blessings are promised to them in the concluding days of the fasts.

2 And what will make thee comprehend what the Night of Majesty is?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ۗ

3 The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months.^a

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ۗ

4 The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair^a —

تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ ۗ

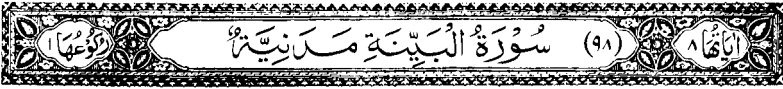
5 Peace! it is till the rising of the morning.^a

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْهَا حَتَّىٰ مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ۗ

3a. A thousand months may be taken as the equivalent of a very long time. Numerically they are equal to about 83 years, leaving 17 years to complete a century. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet according to which a *mujaddid*, or a *reformer*, will appear among the Muslims at the commencement of every century. The *lailat al-Qadr* being a time of great spiritual blessing may also signify the time during which the Prophet worked in person, being actually a period of twenty-three years, or the time during which a *mujaddid* would ordinarily work, which period is more blessed spiritually than the rest of the century.

4a. The Spirit here may signify the Divine Spirit, which is really the force through which the regeneration of humanity is brought about, or it may mean Divine inspiration. The descent of the angels and the Spirit also shows that *lailat al-Qadr*, as hinted at in the last note, has a deeper significance, for though a particular night in the month of Ramaḍān may be characterized by great Divine blessings, it is more especially in connection with the mission of one appointed by Allāh for the regeneration of the world that “the angels and the Spirit” come down from heaven, turning men’s minds to the spiritual values of life.

5a. “Peace” is the distinctive mark of *lailat al-Qadr*. This *peace* comes to the hearts of the true devotees in the form of a tranquillity of mind which makes them fit to receive Divine blessings. But it is also through one commissioned by God that the basis of peace among men is laid.



CHAPTER 98

Al-Bayyinah: The Clear Evidence

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 8 verses)

The Holy Prophet, who received the mightiest of revelations, or that revelation itself, is here called *The Clear Evidence*, the words supplying the name to this chapter, because this revelation, as this chapter shows, contained all the pure and essential teachings of previous scriptures. It may not be one of the very early revelations, but there seems to be no doubt that it is a Makkan revelation, such being the opinion of the majority.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the idolaters could not have been freed till clear evidence came to them^a—

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ

2 A Messenger from Allāh, reciting pure pages,^a

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً

1a. Both the People of the Book, people to whom revelation had been granted at some previous time, and the idolaters of Arabia, among whom no prophet had ever appeared, were sunk so deep in immorality and sin that only a Divine Messenger could now free them from this bondage. The Jews and the Christians, one after another, had exerted themselves to their utmost to reform Arabia, but both had failed. In fact they were themselves demoralized like the Arabs. “It was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life” (Muir). That by the Clear Evidence is meant the Prophet is made clear in the next verse, where this Clear Evidence is spoken of as being a *Messenger from Allāh*.

2a. It should be noted that the Messenger is here described as reciting pure *pages*, thus showing clearly that the Qur’ān existed in a written form at the time of the revelation of this chapter. Their designation as *pure* is to show that the Holy Qur’ān brought them out of all impurities.

3 Wherein are (all) right books.^a

فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ ۝

4 Nor did those to whom the Book was given become divided till clear evidence came to them.^a

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَ نَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ۝

5 And they are enjoined naught but to serve Allāh, being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and to keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and that is the right religion.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۗ لَهُ حُفَاءٌ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ۝

6 Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the idolaters will be in the Fire of hell, abiding therein. They are the worst of creatures.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ ۝

7 Those who believe and do good, they are the best of creatures.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ۝

8 Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of perpetuity wherein flow rivers, abiding therein forever. Allāh is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him.^a That is for him who fears his Lord.

جَزَاءُ هُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ ۝

3a. *Kiṭāb* (pl. *kutab*) means a *book* or an *ordinance*. Whichever significance may be adopted, the meaning of the passage is that all those right directions necessary for the guidance of man, whether previously revealed or not, are to be met with in the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān thus claims to contain all the good points of other sacred books, and, in addition, to supply their deficiencies.

4a. The division mentioned here is the division into believers and disbelievers, some accepting the Messenger and others rejecting him.

8a. The companions of the Holy Prophet are here spoken of as having attained to the highest spiritual stage; compare 89:27–30, where the same words occur regarding spiritual perfection; see 89:30a. This shows clearly that they were above all worldly motives, and not only joined Islām with the single object of pleasing God but also that their sincerity was above all reproach to the end, so that God was pleased with them and made them enter His Garden.



CHAPTER 99

Al-Zilzāl: The Shaking

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 8 verses)

This chapter is entitled *Zilzāl* or *Shaking*. This word occurs in the very first verse, and hints at the severe shaking which was destined to bring about a transformation first in Arabia, and later on in the whole world. This shows the connection with the last chapter, which speaks of a transformation being brought about in the world by the Prophet. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 When the earth is shaken with
her shaking,

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا ۝

2 And the earth brings forth her
burdens,

وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا ۝

3 And man says: What has befallen
her?

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا ۝

4 On that day she will tell her
news,

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا ۝

5 As if thy Lord had revealed to her.^a

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّبِّكَلُ مَا لَهَا ۝

5a. The first verse speaks of a violent shaking of the earth. For the significance of *zalzalah* or *shaking*, see 22:1a. That such a shaking would take place at the Resurrection cannot be denied. That it took place in the Prophet's lifetime is a fact. This was the shaking which brought about that wonderful transformation in Arabia, and then in the whole world, which is spoken of in the last chapter. The second verse speaks of the earth as bringing forth her burdens. This has been taken as signifying both the bringing forth of the dead and the yielding of her hidden treasures (RM). How the earth is bringing forth her hidden treasures of mineral wealth shows the wonderful knowledge of the future disclosed in the Qur'ān. That these are the preliminaries of a great transformation is the one theme of these early revelations. The transformation brought about in the Prophet's life-

6 On that day men will come forth in sundry bodies that they may be shown their works.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصُدُّمُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا
لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۖ

7 So he who does an atom's weight of good will see it.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا
يَرَهُ ۖ

8 And he who does an atom's weight of evil will see it.^a

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ۖ

time was in fact the first stage in the greater transformation to be brought about in the whole world later on, the *ākhirah* of 93:4, for which see 93:5a. The mighty world-conflicts of our day and the unimaginable treasures brought forth in these days are in fact portents of what must follow, the spiritual awakening to be brought about in the world. Vv. 3–5 indicate that, at the happenings referred to in the first two verses, man will wonder and cry out, *what has befallen the earth?* This shows that extraordinary happenings will be witnessed by man in this very life. The earth will *tell her news*, that is to say, great secrets hitherto unknown will be revealed. This is further stressed in v. 5, *as if thy Lord had revealed to her*. In other words, as revelation discloses things which are unknown to man, so will great secrets hitherto unknown be revealed. Maybe there is a deeper reference here that in the wake of these extraordinary happenings will come a general spiritual awakening, as if God had revealed to the earth itself.

8a. Men will be shown their works in the Resurrection by being made to taste of their fruits, but they can also see the good or evil of their works in this life. Good and evil, when practised on a large scale, bring their reward or requital in this life as well. Note that the words here are *he who does*, and thus include both the Muslim and the non-Muslim. Even a non-Muslim who does an atom's weight of good will have its reward, and a Muslim who does an atom's weight of evil will be requited for it.

CHAPTER 100

Al-‘Ādiyāt: The Assaulters

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 11 verses)

This chapter receives its title from the prophetic mention of *The Assaulters* in the first verse, showing that some of the great disasters spoken of in the last chapter were to be brought about by means of wars. This proved true not only in the time of the Holy Prophet, but its truth shines still more clearly in our own day, and the unprecedented wars of our time are no doubt a precursor of a great spiritual awakening, even as they proved in Arabia thirteen centuries ago. As regards its date of revelation, this chapter may be classed with the one preceding it.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

- 1 By those running and uttering cries!
- 2 And those producing fire, striking!
- 3 And those suddenly attacking at morn!
- 4 Then thereby they raise dust,
- 5 Then penetrate thereby gatherings —
- 6 Surely man is ungrateful to his Lord.^a

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالْعَدِيَّاتِ ضَبْحًا ۝
فَالْمُورِيَّاتِ قَدْحًا ۝
فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا ۝
فَأَثَرُنَّ بِهِ نَفْعًا ۝
فَوْسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا ۝
إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ ۝

6a. *‘Ādiyāt* (from *‘adw*, to run) are those running, as also assaulters, and *ḍabḥ* is the uttering of sound in running fast (R). *Mūriyāt* (from *warā*, it produced fire) are those that produce fire, and *qadh* carries a number of significations, among these being making a crack or a hole or corrosion or an act of striking fire (LL). *Mughīrāt* is from *aghāra* meaning he hastened or ran fast or vehemently or made a sudden attack (LL). There is much difference of opinion as to what is meant by these words. According to

7 And surely he is a witness of that.

وَأِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ۝

8 And truly on account of the love of wealth he is niggardly.

وَأِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ۝

9 Knows he not when that which is in the graves is raised,

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ ۝

10 And that which is in the breasts is made manifest?

وَحِصْلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ۝

11 Surely their Lord this day is Aware of them.^a

إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ ۝

I‘Ab, these words describe the condition of the camels running on the occasion of the pilgrimage, but the majority of the commentators interpret these as meaning horses, the reference being to the part they play in war (RM). In this case it would be a prophetic description of the wars through which the opponents, who wanted to destroy Truth by the sword, were ultimately to be brought low. The words are so wide that they may also apply to modern means of warfare. If the strength of an attack on the enemy depended on the swiftness with which the attack was made, and therefore, in days gone by, on the striking force of its horse, the words describe even more fittingly the air attacks of our own days. They, too, make a sound and throw out fire causing holes and fissures and splitting the earth. They, too, attack in the early hours of the morning, raise dust from demolished buildings and penetrate into the thickest parts of the towns. Others understand that these are groups of spiritual wayfarers, who run fast in the way of God. Man’s ungratefulness to his Lord and his excessive love of wealth is the real theme in all cases. He sees only the material side of life and does not pay heed to its spiritual values. The balance of life is thus upset. Disasters come and he is violently shaken so that his eyes may be opened to the real values of life.

11a. A day will come, we are told, when those in the graves — the dead — will be raised to life and what is hidden in the breasts — the deeds which man did, hiding them from the eyes of others — will be made manifest. God is Aware even now, but as in nature, the consequences are made manifest in due time. They may not be as clear here as they will be at the Resurrection, when the sight will be sharpened (50:22), but sometimes they are made manifest here, too.