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 Allâh 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.

Verses 1 and 2:

1. Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates
2. Creates man from a clot.

1a. The Arabs were an ummi 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 refer-
ing 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 trustwor-
thy 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 for-
erm significance is the one generally adopted, because of the mention of a’laqah in the
process of the creation of man in other places in the Holy Qur’an, 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
4 Who taught by the pen, a
5 Taught man what he knew not.
6 Nay, man is surely inordinate,
7 Because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient. a
8 Surely to thy Lord is the return.
9 Hast thou seen him who forbids
10 A servant when he prays? a
11 Seest thou if he is on the right way,
12 Or enjoins observance of duty?
13 Seest thou if he denies and turns away?
14 Knows he not that Allâh sees?
15 Nay, if he desist not, We will seize him by the forelock a —

3a. Akram and Karim (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 Islâm as well as in the protection of the Qur’ân against corruption of every sort. The frequent mention of writing and the pen in the Holy Qur’ân, 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 Abî 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!
17 Then let him summon his council,
18 We will summon the braves of the army.
19 Nay! Obey him not, but prostrate thyself, and draw nigh (to Allâh).

18a. Al-nâdî signifies al-majlis or the council. The dâr al-Nadhâwâh (from the same root nâdâ) 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 zabâniyah “with the Arabs of the classical age” signifies the ghurât (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’an contained in the last chapter is suitably followed in arrangement by one that relates when the revelation of the Qur’an began. It was the Night of Majesty (one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadân), 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 Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty

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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 Ramadân, 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’an was revealed in the month of Ramadân, 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’an” 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.
And what will make thee comprehend what the Night of Majesty is?

The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months.\textsuperscript{a}

The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair\textsuperscript{a} —

Peace! it is till the rising of the morning.\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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 Ramadān 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.

\textsuperscript{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 Makkah revelation, such being the opinion of the majority.

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

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—

2 A Messenger from Allāh, reciting pure pages,

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.\textsuperscript{a}

4 Nor did those to whom the Book was given become divided till clear evidence came to them.\textsuperscript{a}

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

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.

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

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

\textsuperscript{a} Kitåb (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’ån. The Qur’ån thus claims to contain all the good points of other sacred books, and, in addition, to supply their deficiencies.

\textsuperscript{a}a The division mentioned here is the division into believers and disbelievers, some accepting the Messenger and others rejecting him.

\textsuperscript{a}b 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 Islåm 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.

1 When the earth is shaken with her shaking,
2 And the earth brings forth her burdens,
3 And man says: What has befallen her?
4 On that day she will tell her news,
5 As if thy Lord had revealed to her.a

da. 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.

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

8 And he who does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.\(^a\)

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\(^a\) 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

6a. ‘Ādiyāt (from ‘adh, to run) are those running, as also assaulters, and dabh is the uttering of sound in running fast (R). Māriyāt (from warā, it produced fire) are those that produce fire, and qadha carries a number of significations, among these being making a crack or a hole or corrosion or an act of striking fire (L.L.). Muğhrāt is from aghūra meaning he hastened or ran fast or vehemently or made a sudden attack (L.L). 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.

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

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

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

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

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.