

Surah Kawthar, Chapter 108

(The Abundance)

Number of Verses: 3

[Contents of the Surah](#)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

This Surah is known as a Meccan Surah, but some believe that it may be Medinan. Some others have said that this Surah might have been revealed twice; once in Mecca and once in Medina, but the narrations cited on the occasion of its revelation attest to the first idea which says it is Meccan.

[Occasion of Revelation](#)

The following is a story told about the occasion of the revelation of Surah Kawthar: 'As-ibn-wa'il, who was one of the chiefs of the pagans, met the holy Prophet (S) coming out of the Sacred Mosque. He spoke with him (S) for awhile.

In the meantime, a group of authoritative men of the Quraish were sitting in the Mosque watching him from a distance.

When 'As-ibn-Wa'il entered the Mosque they asked him:

"To whom were you speaking?"

He answered:

"With this abtar one".

He used this word for the holy Prophet (S) to taunt him, because he (S) had two sons born of Lady Khadijah; Ghasem and Taher (also called 'Abdullah) who died in Mecca and so, there was no live male issue from the holy Prophet (S). Hence after, the Qur'an applied this name to the enemies of the Prophet. [1](#)

The Arabs used to call the one who had no son /abtar/, and 'abtar' means 'the animal whose tail is cut off'. So, then, it means the one whose succession in his seed has ceased, i.e., the one who has none to inherit him. To console the holy Prophet (S), this Surah was revealed with the glad tidings of the greatest amount or the highest degree of the grace of Allah, bestowed on him.

Those people traditionally considered the male child extraordinarily valuable and thought of him as a substitute for the father. They happily imagined that with the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) his program would cease because he had no son to substitute him to continue it.

The revelation of this Surah was, in fact, an answer to the enemies of the Apostle to inform them that Islam and the Qur'an would remain and ceaselessly continue, forever.

[The Virtue of Studying the Surah](#)

On the virtue of the recitation of this Surah, a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) says:

"He who recites it (Surah Kawthar) Allah will quench his thirst from the streams of Heaven and will recompense him good rewards as many as the number of every sacrifice which the servants of Allah make on the day of the Feast of Sacrifice, together with those sacrifices which are of the People of the Book and the pagans."[2](#)

The name of this Surah, Kawthar, is taken from the first verse of the Surah.

[Surah Kawthar, Verses 1-3](#)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

اِنَّا اَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَاَنْحَرْ

إِنَّ شَانِكَ هُوَ الْإِبْتَرُ

1. ***“Surely (O Muhammad) We have given you abundance (of good (Kawthar)).”***
2. ***“Therefore to your Lord turn in Prayer and Sacrifice.”***
3. ***“Surely your enemy is the one who will be without spring.”***

In this Surah, similar to Surah Duha and Surah Inshirra, the holy Prophet (S) is addressed. One of the objective points in all three Suras is that of consoling him when he was faced with a magnitude of painful incidents and numerous taunts by the offensive language of his enemies.

“Surely (O Muhammad) We have given you abundance of good (Kawthar).”

The term /kauthar/ is a descriptive case derived from /kathrat/ with the meaning of 'a lot of goodness, or blessing'; while gracious persons are also called 'Kawthar'.

What is the purpose of using the term 'Kawthar', here? A narration says that when the holy Prophet (S) sat on the pulpit and recited this Surah, some of the companions asked him what it was that Allah had given him and he answered:

“It is a stream in Heaven, whiter than milk, more clear than a goblet (of crystal) with dome-shaped ornaments from pearls and rubies...”³

Another tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“Kawthar is a stream in Heaven that Allah granted His Apostle for his son (who died in his lifetime)”.

Some have also said the purpose of using the word 'Kawthar' is for the Pool of Abundance (haud-i-kauthar) that belongs to the Prophet (S) wherefrom the believers quench their thirst when arriving in Paradise.⁴

Some have commented on it as being 'prophecy' and some others as 'the Qur'an'; still others as 'abundance of the Prophet's companions and followers', or the 'abundance of the descendants' all of whom came from his daughter, Fatimah Zahra (as), and they multiplied to such an extent that it is impossible to count them.

They are not only, now, but, until the advent of the Hereafter, the reminders of the holy Prophet (S). Some have also commented on it as being 'intercession', narrating a tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) in this connection, as a reference.

Even, Fakhr-i-Razi has narrated fifteen different narrations on the meaning of 'Kawthar'.

But, it seems that most of them are the statements of the clear examples of this broad concept, because, as was mentioned before, 'Kawthar' means 'goodness and blessing in abundance', and we know that

Allah, the Graceful, granted the holy Prophet (S) so many blessings so that each of those mentioned in the above is one clear example of them. There are also many other examples that may be cited as example commentaries for the verse.

However, all the divine gifts granted to the holy Prophet (S) in all aspects, even the victories in his expeditions against his enemies, and the scholars of his followers in the Muslim community, who guard the burning torch of Islam and Qur'an, in every period and age, and carry it throughout the world, all in all are involved in this 'abundance of good'.

It should not be forgotten that Allah revealed these verses to His Prophet's holy heart at the time when the manifestations of this 'abundance of good' had not yet appeared. It was a miraculous piece of news which informed about the near future and the remote future regarding the legitimacy of the holy Prophet (S).

This great blessing and the

'abundance of good'

needs a lofty thankfulness, although creatures can never thank the Creator for His blessings, fully, because even the success of being thankful is another blessing from Him which needs thankfulness.

When it is so;

"Therefore to your Lord turn in prayer and Sacrifice".

Yes, He is the One Who grants these blessings, therefore, prayer, worship and sacrifice, which is also a kind of worship, itself, have no meaning save for Allah, particularly in regard to the meaning of the term Lord which indicates the constancy of grace, providence and Lordship of Providence.

Briefly, 'worship', in the form of prayer or making a sacrifice, is only the Lord's and Benefactor's privilege, and it is exclusively for the Pure Supreme Being.

This refers to the behaviour of the pagans who used to prostrate and sacrifice to the idols while they knew their affluence belonged to Allah. and in any case, the phrase 'your Lord', used in the verse, is a clear evidence for the necessity of 'intention with divine motive' in worship.

Many commentators believe that the purpose, involved here refers to the prayer on the Feast of Sacrifice, and making sacrifice on the same day. But, the meaning of the verse is apparently general and inclusive, even though prayer and sacrifice of the Feast on the day are of its clear examples.

Perhaps, using the term /wanhar/ based on /nahr/, which is specific to butchering a camel, is for the reason that sacrificing a camel, amongst other offerings, enjoyed a higher importance for the Muslims of that time who liked it very much, and thus, its butchering was not possible without the showing of

generosity.

Here are two more commentaries on the above verse:

1. The implied meaning of the phrase /wanhar/ is 'facing Qiblah (the direction of the Ka'ba) when saying a prayer', because the word /nahr/ originally means 'throat' then, it has been used with the meaning of 'standing in front of anything'.
2. The purpose involved, here is the 'raising of the hands up to the throat and face'.

A tradition says that when this Surah was revealed, the holy Prophet (S) asked Gabriel:

"What is this Inuhayrah! that my Lord has commissioned me to do"?

Gabriel said:

"This is not Inuhayrah!. Allah has, however, commanded you to raise your hands at the beginning of prayer when you say lallahu akbar! and when you are going to perform bowing or prostration and after that, because our prayer and that of the angels, in the seven heavens, are like this. Everything has an adornment and the adornment of prayer is raising the hands at the time of saying lallahu akhar!". [5](#)

There is another tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) who, on the commentary of this verse, indicating with his holy hands, said:

"The purpose is that you raise your hands so that your palms be towards Qiblah (the direction of the Ka'ba)". [6](#)

There is no problem in combining all these meanings, in particular, there are many Islamic narrations about raising the hands at the time of saying /allahu akbar/. Thus, the verse has such a vast meaning that it covers all of them. However, the first commentary is the most appropriate.

In the last verse of this short Surah, regarding the taunts made by the chiefs of the pagans to that holy being, it says:

"Surely your enemy is the one who will be without offspring".

The term /sani'/ is derived from /sana'an/ with the meaning of 'enmity, spitefulness, and peevishness'; and /sani'/ is the one who possesses these characteristics.

It is worthy to note that /abtar/ originally means 'the animal whose tail is cut off' and the enemies of Islam taunted the holy Prophet (S) by saying this with the hope that after his departure from this world and having no son to inherit his position, the dissolution of Islam's sovereignty would happen. But, Qur'an, consoling the holy Prophet (S) tells him that it is not him who will be without offspring, but surely his enemy is.

Explanation: Lady Hazrat Fatimah and Kawthar

It was said earlier that 'Kawthar' has a vast inclusive meaning which is 'goodness in abundance' and the examples are many.

A large number of scholars of the Shi'ah school believe that one of the most clear examples of that word is the auspicious existence of Lady Fatimah Zahra (as), because the occasion of the revelation of the verse says that they accused the holy Prophet (S) of being without offspring, but the Qur'an says:

"Surely (O Muhammad) We have given you abundance of good (Kawthar)".

From this meaning we understand that this 'abundance of good' is the very Lady Fatimah Zahra (as) of whom the descendants of the Prophet (S) increased abundantly and thousands and thousands of them scattered in the world preaching his religion and preserving it.

It is a fact that none can correctly count the number of descendants of Hazrat Ali and Fatimah (as) who are recognized as the descendants of the holy Prophet (S), among whom so many great scholars, scientists, writers, commentators, jurists, traditionists and splendid leaders left some outstanding works and unmatched fame in this world, and tried to protect Islam with their donations and devotions.

Here, we encounter a very interesting discussion from Fakhr-i-Razi who, along with other commentaries on 'Kawthar', says:

"The third statement is that this Surah has been revealed to reject those who criticized the holy Prophet (S) for his lack of progeny, therefore, the meaning of the Surah is that Allah shall give him a generation which will remain stable through all ages.

And consider this, that although a number of Ahlul-Bait have been martyred, the world is replete with them, where as from the Ummayyads (who were the enemies of Islam) there remains no mentionable figure in the world. Then, behold and see how many of the great men of leadership such as Baqir, Sadiq, Rida, and Nafs-i-Zakiyyah⁷ are found among them, (the household)."⁸

The Miracle of this Surah

This Surah virtually contains three important miraculous predictions.

On the one hand, it informs the Prophet (S) of the, glad tidings of the

'abundance of good',

(although the verb /a'tayna/ is in the past tense form, but it may be as the indisputable tense common to the present and future which has been stated in the form of the past tense) and this 'abundance of good' encompasses all victories and successes that were obtained, later, by the holy Prophet (S); were not

predictable in Mecca at the time of the revelation of this Surah.

On the other hand, the Surah foretells that the holy Prophet (S) shall not be without posterity, and his generations and descendants shall exist abundantly in the world.

The third prediction of the Surah is that the enemies of the Prophet (S) will be 'abtar', i.e., without posterity. This, too, actually happened and those enemies were so rooted out that no trace of their generations can be seen today. Tribes such as the Ummayyads and Abbasids, who opposed the Prophet (S) and his prophecy and who enjoyed such a population that their family and children could not be counted, today, of which there is not one of them to be introduced.

Allah and the Plural Pronoun

It is noteworthy that, here and in many other verses of the Holy Qur'an, Allah introduces Himself by the first person plural pronoun, thus:

"Surely We have given you abundance of good (Kawthar)".

This sense, and the likes of it, is for the expression of Glory and Power, because when the nobility talk about themselves, they announce not only themselves, but, also their commissionaires, and this refers to the power and nobility as well as to the presence of those in obedience along with the commands.

In the verse under discussion the term /an/ is also another emphasis on this meaning and the phrase

/a'taynaka/ 'We have given you',

rather than /ataynaka/, is an evidence to the fact that He has awarded him / kauthar/, which, itself, is a great glad tiding to the Prophet (S) in order to keep his holy heart aloof from annoyance resulting from the nonsensical remarks of the enemies, and consequently, languor does not affect his firm determination, and for him to know that Allah is his support Who is the source of all welfare and grace in abundance.

Supplication

O Lord! Do not deprive us from the blessings of that 'abundance of good' that You granted to Your Prophet (S).

O Lord! You know that we heartily love Your Prophet (S) and his pure progeny (S); include us among them.

O Lord! The glory of his essence and his religion is much notable; add to this grandeur, majesty and honour.

- [1.](#) The Messenger of Allah (S) had another son by the name of Abraham, born of Mariyah Qibtiyyah in 8 AH. He, too, died before he was 2 years old.
- [2.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 548
- [3.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 549
- [4.](#) Ibid.
- [5.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 550
- [6.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 550
- [7.](#) Nafs-i-Zakiyyah is another name for Muhammad-ibn-Abdullah, the son of Imam Hassan Mujtaba (as) who was martyred by Mansur-i-Dawaniqi in 145 AH.
- [8.](#) Tafsir-i-Fakhr-i-Razi, vol. 32, p. 124.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-20/surah-kawthar-chapter-108#comment-0>