ISLAMIAT – LESSON 1

MAJOR THEMES OF THE QUR’AN

For questions regarding the major themes of the Quran, you will be asked two types of questions:

• The major theme or themes of the Qur’an that appear in each passage,

• The way each passage presents its theme(s) in its own particular way.

Therefore, while attempting a question on this topic (which will be the first question of Paper 1) you need to know both the fore mentioned aspects of each of the 15 passages in your syllabus.

The 15 passages (a list of which can be found in the appendix of the Islamiat syllabus) are divided into three main themes:

Allah in Himself:

1. **Sura 2.255:**

*Allah. There is no god but He, the living, the self-subsisting, eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what is before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass any of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme.*

Major theme:

The passage symbolizes Allah’s authority, power and knowledge. Revolving around the main theme of Tauheed, it impresses upon man by declaring that Allah alone is the sole worthy of worship. This passage teaches that Allah, unlike humans, has no weaknesses and He guards the entire universe without any helper. His Knowledge is perfect and no one can interfere in His dominion.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

Allah has distinctly categorized his attributes that He is since ever and forever, hence Al-Qayyum. He has also mentioned His authority over the world is Chapter 6, verse 101 of the Quran, but here He elaborates on it with special reference to His complete knowledge of the known and unknown. Allah’s supremacy, another vital theme of this passage, has been mentioned time and again in the Quran for example in Surah Ikhlas. However, in this very passage, Allah talks of His supremacy by highlighting the fact that, unlike any ordinary creature, He does not feel fatigued.

1. **Sura 6.101–103**

*101. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: how can He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things, and He has full knowledge of all things. 102. That is Allah, your Lord! There is no god but He, the Creator of all things: then worship Him: and He has power to dispose of all affairs. 103. No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.*

Major Theme:

The prime theme of this passage is Allah’s unity: He is one – He has no descendants and no predecessors. Hence, his origin is beyond our comprehension and understanding. Moreover, this passage also mentions Allah’s absolute control over all worldly affairs. Since He created the world, He best knows how to manage it; and in this management he requires the help of none, for He is self sufficient. These verses also emphasize on the necessity to worship Him alone because only He can dispense justice and fulfill our desires; if He wills.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

Allah’s unity and individuality has also been mentions in great detail in Chapter 112 of the Quran. However, this passage presents this theme in a distinct way by explaining that since He has no consort or spouse, it is impossible for Him to have progeny; thereby refuting the claim that He is that father or son of anybody. Furthermore, this passage sheds light on Allah’s complete authority over the universe and unlike Ayat al-Kursi, talks of it with reference to His knowledge over all that is hidden and evident and His ability to handle all the matters of the universe singlehandedly and flawlessly.

1. **Sura 41.37**

*37. Among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Adore not the sun and the moon, but adore Allah, who created them, if it is Him you wish to serve.*

Major Theme:

*This verse of the holy Quran categorizes night, day, sun and moon as mere signs or symbols of Allah’s existence; primarily to serve as a rebuttal to those who worshipped them. This verse explicitly warns that it is Allah who is worthy of worship for Allah is their creator and without the will of Allah neither day nor night, neither sun nor moon can function as it does. So, it is Allah who is all powerful not his creations.*

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

The main theme in this passage is to warn human that Allah alone is worthy of worship. Although this theme is found in various other verses of the Quran such as surah Anaam, but this passage eliminates the probability or worshipping any other object by stating that they are all creations of Allah and Allah is the ultimate powerful.

1. **Sura 42.4–5**

*4. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: and He is most high, most great. 5. The heavens are almost rent asunder from above them, and the angels celebrate the praises of their Lord, and pray for forgiveness for beings on earth: Behold! Verily Allah is He, the oft-forgiving, the most merciful.*

Major Theme:

The main theme of this passage is that Allah is the absolute owner of the universe and all that exists therein. He is the creator, cherisher and sustainer of the universe and has no partners in His dominion. Had there been partners, the system of nature would never have been as flawless as it is now. Hence, this passage implies Allah’s oneness and unity. Moreover, since He is the sole creator, all the creations are constantly involved in His praise and are seeking His forgiveness for Allah is the most beneficent, the most merciful.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

Surah Anaam and Surah Fussilat both clearly state that Allah is the sole creator of the universe but Surah Shura reflects upon the majesty and grandeur of Allah as felt in deep fear and reverence by angels etc. Allah says in the Quran in Chapter 7, verse 156: “…But my mercy extendeth to all things…” This means that Allah’s mercifulness is a subject discussed at other instances in the Quran too, but this very passage presents this theme in a distinct manner. It mentions of them from the perspective of angels and other heavenly creatures; that they are constantly seeking His forgiveness for they know He is the most merciful.

1. **Sura 112**

*1. Say: He is Allah, the one and only; 2. Allah, the eternal, absolute; 3. He does not beget, nor is He begotten; 4. And there is none like Him.*

Major Theme:

The major theme presented in this passage is that Allah is one, without any hint of plurality. He has no share in His lordship, nither in essence nor in attributes. Hence worship is due only to Allah; all other being are his creations and therefore incomparable to Him. Moreover, this Surah illustrates the concept that Allah is eternal and immortal and independent on any person whereas all persons are dependent on Him. Therefore the notion that Allah is the father or son of any stands null and void in the light of these verses.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

At various places in the Holy Quran, the concept of Allah’s singularity has been mentioned. “…there is no God but I…” (21:25), “And your God is one God…” (2:163), “Allah: there is no god but He…” (2:255). However, Surah Ikhlas mentions it in a different way but clearing all confusion in this regard. It clearly mentions that Allah cannot be visualized in human terms such as father and son – He is above all. Surah Anaam also speaks that Allah has no consorts but Surah Ikhlas extends it further to the concept of begetting.

Allah’s relationship with the created world:

1. **Sura 1**

*1. In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful. 2. Praise be to Allah, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds; 3. Most gracious, most merciful; 4. Master of the day of judgment. 5. You we worship and your aid we seek. 6. Show us the straightway, 7. The way of those to whom You have given your grace, not those who earn your anger, nor those who go astray.*

Major Theme:

This is the opening Surah of the Holy Quran – the book of guidance. It teaches us about the various attributes of Allah like Ar-Rahman, the most merciful and Al-Raheem, the most beneficent. It makes us aware of Allah’s wrath for those who deny or ignore His teachings. It also teaches us about the Day of Judgment, when the entire record of every man and woman will be presented before Allah. This Surah is actually a prayer from Allah’s servants to show them the path of the righteous so as to earn His pleasure.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

In this Surah, Allah shows that the humans are seeking His help so as to not tread the path of those who went astray by following Satan’s evil path whereas in Surah 114 Allah asks humans to consider Him as their guide so that they refrain from evil. Allah’s mercifulness has been mentioned in other Surahs too such as Surah Shura, but this passage refers to that mercifulness as an attribute which can protect humans from treading the wrong path.

1. **Sura 2.21–22**

*21. O people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, so that you may have the chance to learn righteousness; 22. Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your**canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and by it brought forth fruits for your sustenance; then do not**set up rivals to Allah, when you know.*

Major theme:

These verses of Surah Baqarah are about Allah, the creator and Cherisher of all mankind and hence exclusively worthy of worship and adoration. This passage serves as a reminder to mankind of the countless blessings Allah has bestowed upon them - all of which have a purpose: to facilitate humans. The earth is place to reside in; heavens are a shelter and rain a symbol of growth. Therefore, since Allah has been so generous on mankind, humans must not set partners with Him; but should praise Him and worship Him, for setting partners in worship to Allah – shirk – is the most heinous and unforgivable of all sins.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

Abstinence from shirk is one of the most fundamental obligations of humans if they are to earn Allah’s mercy. Hence the commandment to refrain from shirk has appeared time and again in the Quran [(4:48) and (7:140)]. However in these two verses refraining from shirk has been linked with the fact that Allah has bestowed innumerous blessings on mankind such as earth, heaven, rain and food, therefore it is unjust on our part to set up partners in worship with Allah. Moreover, Surah Fussilat also mentions Allah’s creations such as the sun and moon as does Surah Baqarah mention the heavens and earth but Surah Baqarah differs because it explains the purpose of these creations too.

1. **Sura 96.1–5**

*1. Read! in the name of your Lord, who created, 2. Created man out of a clot of congealed blood: 3. Proclaim! And your Lord is most bountiful, 4. He who taught by the pen, 5. Taught man what he did not know.*

*Major Themes:*

These verses of Surah Alaq represent the beginning of revelation through Angel Gabriel to Prophet (P.B.U.H). This very first revelation mentions Allah’s relation with His creations that He alone is the creator of all beings that exist. It also clearly asserts that initially man knew nothing and Allah granted Him knowledge which eventually led him to be superior over all other creations (Ashraf-al-Makhlooqat).

The Way each passage presents its theme in a distinct way:

This passage expresses its theme in a most convincing way. Surah Fussilat, Surah Anaam and Ayat-al-kursi all say that Allah is the sole creator. However, Surah Alaq expounds on it further by adding that Allah created man out of a mere clot of congealed blood. The second theme in this passage is of Allah’s infinite knowledge, some of which he gave to man too. This theme has also been presented in Surah Baqarah: “And He taught Adam the names of all things” (2:31). But this passage establishes a vital link between that knowledge and the pen for it is due to the pen that knowledge was recorded and passed on.

1. **Sura 99**

*1. When the earth is shaken to her utmost convulsion, 2. And the earth throws up her burdens, 3. And man cries out: ‘What is the matter with her?’ 4. On that day will she declare her tidings: 5. for that your Lord will have given her inspiration. 6. on that day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown their deeds. 7. Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good see it! 8. And anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.*

Major Theme:

This Surah illustrates the doomsday. A severe earthquake will be felt after which the world will come to an end. In this Surah, the reality that a day will definitely come when every deed done by man will be brought to light is depicted. All his labors will be exposed and nothing will remain hidden. Whatever good or evil he had done even when no one could see him will be bought before him, and he will be rewarded or punished accordingly. On that day, each man alone will stand answerable for his own deeds. No other person will in any way be able to help him. And that day, Allah will dispense justice – no one would be denied his right neither would anyone be given an additional punishes. Even the minutest of deeds will be accounted for.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

The first theme of this Surah is the happenings of the Day of Judgment. This theme is found in other Surahs of the Quran too. “it will cast out whatever is inside and become empty” (84:4) , “when the graves will be spewed out” (100:9). However, this Surah mentions man’s reaction to it: how will he respond? It is a description of how the terrible situation will affect man’s senses. The second theme of this passage is that absolute justice will be done. Surah Anaam says that Allah’s grasp is over all vision. Surah Zilzaal extends upon this theme by stating that not a deed as minute as an atom will go unnoticed.

1. **Sura 114**

*1. Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, 2. The King of mankind, 3. The God of Mankind, 4. From the mischief of the whisperer who withdraws, 5. Who whispers into the hearts of mankind, 6. Among jinns and among mankind.*

Major Theme:

Firstly, in this Surah refuge is sought with Allah through His attributes which are directly related to man. Man’s appeal to refuge is partnered by repetitive earnest calls of mercy. Allah safeguards His servants. There is no one besides Him with whom refuge may be sought for only Allah has the power to protect His people from the evil forces – forces which lure man by instilling in him evil desires or otherwise.

The way in which it presents its theme in a distinct way:

The central themes of both Surah Falaq and Surah Nas are almost over lapping. However, in Surah Falaq, refuge is sought from various evils while this Surah seeks protection against Satan, the root of all evils and the enemy of Tauheed. Secondly, Surah Falaq refers to Satam with regard to one of his characteristics: jealousy. But in this Surah, his method and technique, his clan and accomplices, the sphere of his incursions and onslaughts are all brought to light so that people have a clear perception of their shrewd enemy and are in a position to defend themselves.

Allah’s messengers:

1. **2.30–37**

*30. Behold, your Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth.’ They said: ‘Will You place there one who will make mischief there and shed blood?- whilst we celebrate your praises and glorify your holy (name)?’ He said: ‘I know what you do not know.’ 31. And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: ‘Tell me the names of these if you are right.’ 32. They said: ‘Glory to You, of knowledge we have none, save what You have taught us: In truth it is You who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.’ 33. He said: ‘Adam! Tell them their names.’ When he had told them, Allah said: ‘Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’ 34. And behold, We said to the angels: ‘Bow down to Adam’. And they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject faith. 35. We said: ‘Adam! You and your wife dwell in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things in it as You wish. But do not approach this tree, or you will run into harm and transgression.’ 36. Then Satan made them slip from there, and got them out of what they had been in. We said: ‘Go down, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood, for a time.’ 37. Then Adam learnt from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is often-returning, most merciful.*

Major Theme:

These verses of Surah Baqarah speak of the creation of man, the high station and destiny intended for him, particularly with reference to his being appointed vicegerent of Allah on earth, his excellence in knowledge over other creations and his endowment with special abilities. It speaks of the haughtiness and arrogance of Iblis which prevented from prostrating before Adam as Allah had commanded. This passage also implies that man is not perfect and can hence make mistakes like that of Adam and Eve who were caught prey to Satan’s evil conspiracies. However, Allah apart from being perfect and flawless is also extremely merciful for He generously forgave Adam and Eve’s transgression.

The way in which it presents its theme in a distinct manner:

Surah Alaq mentions the transfer of knowledge from Allah to man with regard to pen. However, these verses present the same theme of transfer of knowledge from Allah to man in a distinct manner. Allah’s granting of knowledge and subsequent instruction to angels to bow before Adam is in fact a link this knowledge with man’s superior status. It is because of this knowledge that, as the passage explains, that man stands at a pedestal higher than any other creation. Moreover, Allah’s forgiveness has also been mentioned in Surah Shura but here it is presented in the light of a particular anecdote. How Adam and Eve transgressed their limits, yet, Allah – the most merciful – forgave them.

1. **Sura 6.75–79**

*75. So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, so that he might have certainty. 76. When the night covered him over, he saw a star: He said: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, he said: ‘I do not love things that set.’ 77. When he saw the moon rising in splendor, he said: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when the moon set, he said: ‘Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among those who go astray.’ 78. When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he said: ‘This is my Lord; this is the greatest.’ But when the sun set, he said: ‘O my people! I am indeed free from your giving partners to Allah.’ 79. ‘For me, I have set my face firmly and truly towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah.’*

Major Theme:

This passage revolves around Hazrat Ibrahim’s (A.S) quest and search for God. He wandered helplessly for many years, pondering over who real God was. His people had set heavenly bodies such as sun and moon their god. But he just could not endorse. He failed to accept that his god could simply set in the horizon like the sun or moon. For him god was eternal – who would never fade away or die and hence he refused to accept his peoples’ god as the divine power. In this refusal, he eventually recognized the true god: Allah – who was eternal and immortal.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

The pivotal theme of this passage is the denial of idol worship and hence refraining from shirk. Several injunctions in the holy Quran condemn shirk but these verses of Surah Anaam describe with reasoning, Hazrat Ibrahim’s stance for rejecting shirk. “Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him…” (4:48). But this passage goes on to why the sun and moon are not worthy of worship: they are creations of Allah with no authority over themselves and set and rise as per the will of Allah.

1. **Sura 5.110**

*Then will Allah say: ‘Jesus son of Mary! Recount my favor to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you spoke to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel. And behold! You make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by my leave, and you breathe into it and it becomes a bird by my leave, and you heal those born blind, and the lepers, by my leave. And behold! You bring forth the dead by my leave. And behold! I restrained the Children of Israel from you when you showed them the clear signs, and the unbelievers among them said: ‘This is nothing but evident magic.’*

Major Themes:

In this passage Allah recalls the countless favors he rendered towards Hazrat Isa in the form of miracles. Miracles are testimony to the fact that Allah aids his prophets in their mission. Likewise, Hazrat Isa was granted miracles such as treatment on lepers, giving life to dead, talking at a young age etc just so that his people would believe in him and the message he had bought. However, what is noteworthy is that even these miracles could not be performed without Allah’s permission; which confirms Allah’s absolute control and authority over the universe.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

The miracles mentioned in this verse have also been mentioned in other places in the Quran: “we gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear (signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit” (2:87). However, here they have been mentioned as favors which Allah is recounting at the Day of Judgment to assert how He aided His prophets in their mission to spread His message.

**14. Sura 93**

*1. By the glorious morning light, 2. And by the night when it is still 3. Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor is he displeased. 4. And truly the Hereafter will be better for you than the present. 5. And soon your Lord will give you so that you will be pleased. 6. Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? 7. And He found you wandering, and He gave you guidance. 8. And He found you in need, and made you independent. 9. Therefore, do not treat the orphan with harshness, 10. Nor drive the beggar away; 11. But tell about the bounty of your Lord!*

Major Themes:

These verses of Surah Duha were revealed to console the Prophet (PBUH) in the initial days when the revelations were suspended for a while and the Prophet (PBUH) felt that Allah has forsaken him. These verses remind him that Allah did not forsake him when he was an orphan and shelter less so how could He forsake him now? If Allah had arranged for Prophet’s (PBUH) survival then, He will also guide him in this mission. Allah also tells the Prophet (PBUH) through these verses that he needs to be patient for his future will be better than his present. Lastly, the Surah advises the Prophet (PBUH) tp proclaim the bounties of Allah by acknowledging that all bounties received are due to His grace and share them with others.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

In Surah Maidah too, Allah recounts His favors on Hazrat Isa, just like in Surah Duha Allah reminds Prophet (PBUH) of the favors He has lent him. But, both differ in purpose. In Surah Maidah the objective is to reiterate how beneficent Allah has been whereas in Surah Duha the prime purpose to console the Prophet (PBUH) who feels forsaken and lonely.

1. **Sura 108**

*1. To you have We granted abundance. 2. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice. 3. For he who hates you, he will be cut off.*

Major Themes:

This passage teaches all believers to thank Allah for all the bounties of life and show great respect to Prophet (PBUH). The pagans of Makah taunted him as being abtar when he lost his sons in infancy. Allah revealed this Surah to console him by granting him the fount of abundance which contains both material and spiritual blessings. It further teaches that there is Allah’s reward for those who bear the hardships of this world with patience and complete faith in Allah. The Surah also contains a lesson for those who harbor prejudice and ill feelings for the Prophet (PBUH) that they will remain without Allah’s mercy.

The way it presents its theme in a distinct way:

In this Surah, Allah distinctly teaches His messenger and all the believers that the best way to thank Him is through remembrance or by making sacrifices in any form. It also tells us that though Prophet (PBUH) had no male heirs and had to face severe opposition, he maintained his faith in Allah and therefore Allah blessed him in this world as well as the hereafter. In Surah Maidah, Allah supported Jesus by granting him miracles but here He supported Prophet (PBUH) with the fount of abundance.

For Further Reading:

“Ferozsons Islamiat” by Farkhanda Noor Muhammad (pages 1-22)