Occasions of Revelation
Asbāb al-nuzūl

Dr. Syed Nasir Zaidi

Occasions of Revelation

- As we have already discussed, over a period of 23 years, it means the Qu according to the events and incidents. Therefore, it is useful to know the circumstances under which a verse is revealed.

- According to some scholars, it is not possible to understand real meanings of the Qur ôverses wit without understanding their context and reasons of revelation, or in other words, these circumstances are the means of access to the mea

Difference between Shan al-Nuzul and Sabab al- Nuzul

- Sometimes, verse or verses revealed immediately after the incident which means the revelation took place as a result of that incident. It is called *sabab al-nuzul*.

- Whenever a verse or verses are revealed in a particular context, which can be related to a person, or an event or concerning the obligation of Islamic law then that incident is referred to as the *shan al-nuzul*.

- Shan al-nuzul is more general while sabab al-nuzul is more specific.

Types of Occasions of Revelation

- Not all verses have occasions of revelation, rather they have revealed purely for guidance. There is no specific question or circumstances that has prompted its revelation.

- الَر كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

ñ This is a Book which we have
forth men, by their Lordôs per
light- to the path of the Ibrahim 14:1) y,

Types of Occasions of Revelation, cont…

- **Actions of Individual**: There were individuals at the time of revelation, whose character and qualities were so good or corrupt that verses were revealed about them. The best example is verse no 55 and 56 of Al-Maida was revealed when Imam Ali (s)gave a beggar alms, while in the state of prayer. Surah Al- Lahab is another example of corrupt individuals.

- **Particular and Well-known Incident**: To emphasize the lessons to be learnt from an incident, God would reveal a verse or chapter about it. For example, from the verse إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا, we can learnt a lot about the relation between Muslims and unbelievers.

Types of Occasions of Revelation, cont…

- **Questions Asked of the Prophet(s):** The prophet (s) was being asked questions frequently, both by the Muslims and unbelievers as we see in Surah Baqara, verse 217, يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ, they ask you concerning the sacred month, about fighting in it, say: fighting in it is a grave matter.

The Importance of Knowing the Occasion of Revelation of a Verse

- The historical background at the time of the Prophet (s)
- The philosophy and *hikmah* behind the verses
- The reason underlying some legal rulings
- Determining the real context of the verse or verses to get to know the different aspects of the verses
- Determining the application of the verses
- Determining the unchanging needs of human beings, which have remained constant since the time of the revelation, and the variable needs, which change with time and place
- Understanding the prediction of the Quran about future
- Understanding the miracle aspe
  talks about the past events which were unknown to the Prophet(s)

The Importance of Knowing the Occasion

- Some examples:
- (i) أَمَّنْ يُجيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذا دَعاهُ وَ يَكْشِفُ السُّوء(النمل/٦٢), Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil
- إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِن شَعَآئِرِ اللّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ, Indeed Safa and Murwa are among the marks of Allah, so whoever comes to the House for Hajj or performs Umrah, it is permissible for him, if he makes rounds between them (Al-Baqara/ 158)
- وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدْوَّ اللّهِ, Prepare against them whatever force you can and the trained horses whereby you frighten Allah's enemy and