

—TAFSEER— SURAH YUSUF

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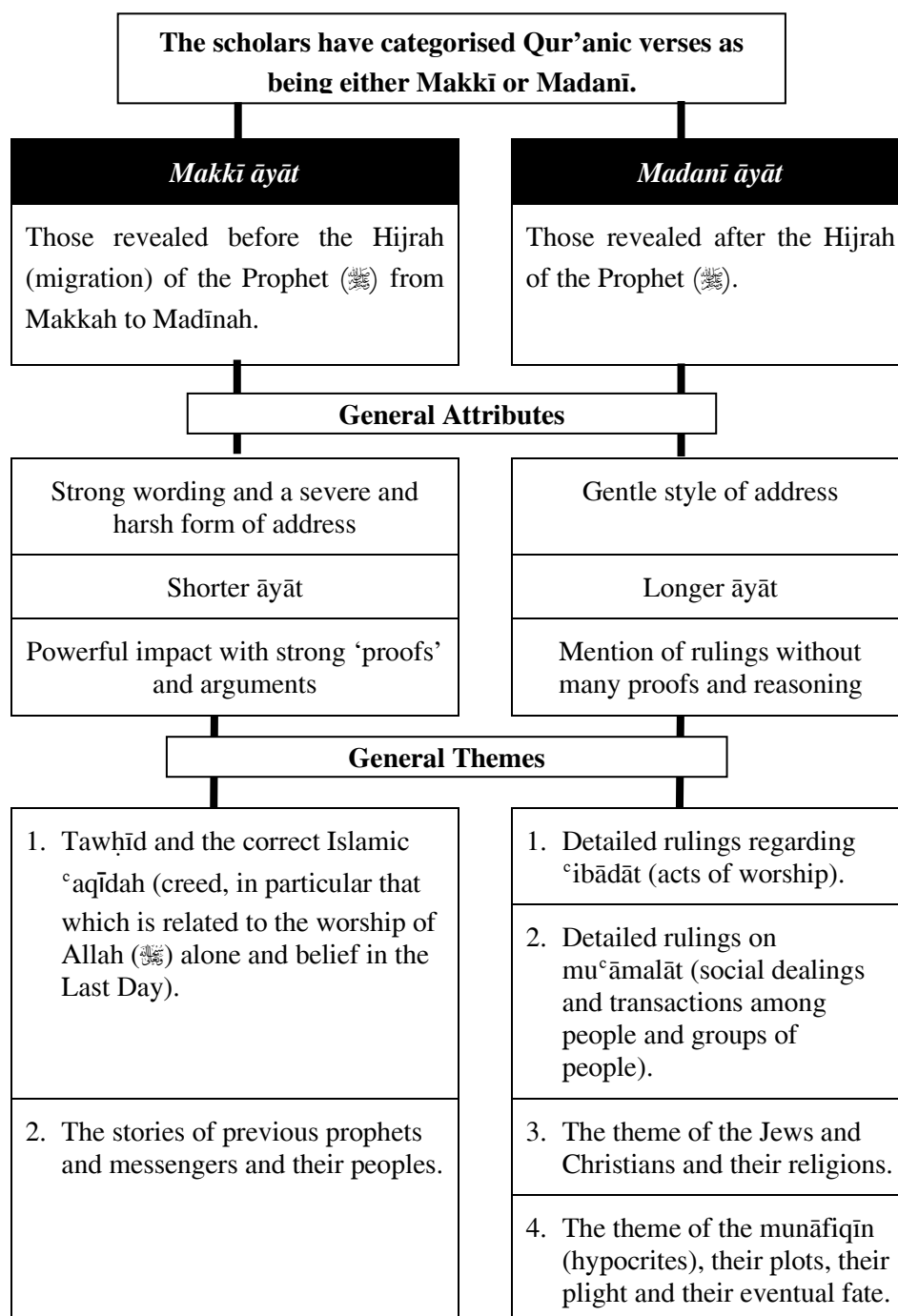
Course Objectives

- Inculcate within the students love for the Qur'an.
- Develop a detailed understanding of the story of Yūsuf (عليه السلام).
- Acquaint the students with the wisdoms, lessons, and Islamic rulings within this *sūrah*, as well as those related to it.
- Demonstrate how practical lessons can be derived from the *āyāt* of the Qur'an.
- Increase the students' īmān.
- Improve the students' association with the Qur'an.
- Appreciate the comprehensive nature and magnitude of the Qur'an.
- Improve the students' Arabic vocabulary.
- Provide a feeling for the importance of *tafsīr* as an Islamic discipline.

Introductory information about Sūrat Yūsuf

Name	The sūrah is named thus because it is dedicated, in its entirety, to the biography of Yūsuf (عليه السلام)
Place of Revelation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the majority of scholars the entire sūrah is Makkī. • According to b. °Abbās (عليه السلام) and Qatādah the sūrah is Makkī with the exception of āyāt 1, 2, 3 and 7.
Number of āyāt :	It is composed of 111 āyāt according to the most correct opinion.

Classification of Revelation: Makkī/ Madanī



Do the āyāt within Sūrat Yūsuf comply with the general theme of



Makkan verses? And if not, what lesson can be derived from this?

Reasons for Revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*)

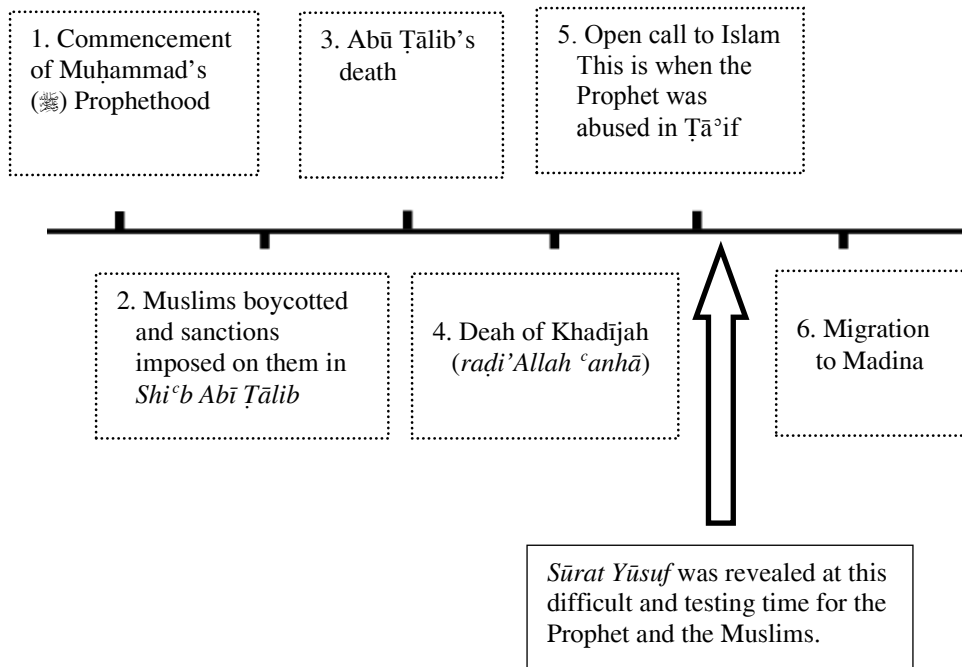
1. Test	<p>One view is that Sūrat Yūsuf was revealed after the Jews attempted to test the Prophet (ﷺ) in an effort to discredit him. Thus, because the Prophet was from the lineage of Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) they asked him about Yūsuf (عليه السلام).</p> <p>Another version states that the Jews told the idolaters of Makkah to question the Prophet about Yūsuf, and how the family of Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) moved from Palestine to Egypt, in order to test his prophethood. The Jews were of the opinion that the Prophet (ﷺ) would seek the answer by asking them about Yūsuf (عليه السلام), thus exposing himself (ﷺ) as a fraud. However, this plot of theirs failed because Allah revealed this sūrah to His messenger (ﷺ). In fact Allah further said:</p> <p>تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَذَابَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾</p> <p><i>That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muḥammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. So be patient; indeed, the [best] outcome is for the righteous [Sūrat Hūd, 11:49]</i></p>
2. Best of stories	<p>Al-Ḥākim reports that Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās reported that, as the Qur'an was being revealed to the Prophet, he was relaying it to his companions, until the companions requested, "Please relate to us stories", so Allah revealed: <i>We relate to you, [O Muḥammad], the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran although you were, before it, among the unaware. [Sūrat Yūsuf, 12:3]</i></p> <p>Then the Prophet conveyed the story of Yūsuf to the Companions until they said "please speak to us"; so Allah revealed: <i>Allah has sent down the best statement, a consistent Book wherein is reiteration.... [Sūrat al-Zumar, 39:23]</i></p>

	In another narration by Sa‘īd b. Jubayr it is added that the Prophet spoke to the companions, until a time when they asked the Prophet, “please remind us,” so Allah then revealed: <i>Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?... [Sūrat al-Hadīd, 57:16]</i>
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This teaches us the importance of being diverse in our teaching and propagating methods. Audiences must be kept engaged in a way that their hearts continue to yearn for more.

Was *Sūrat Yūsuf* revealed near the beginning or end of the Makkan period?



The Basmallah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Compassionate.

This 'formula' of 'commencing in the name of God' is referred to as the *basmallah* in the Arabic language.

Is the *basmallah* an āyah like the other āyāt of the Qur'an?

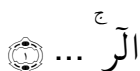
Scholars agree...	...that the <i>basmallah</i> is an āyah of the Qur'an in <i>Sūrat al-Naml</i> , Q. 27: 30.
	... that the <i>basmallah</i> is not recited when commencing <i>Sūrat al-Barā'ah</i> / <i>Tawbah</i> (Q. 9); i.e. it is not an āyah in this sūrah.
Scholars disagree...	<p>...about whether the <i>basmallah</i> is an āyah of the Qur'an in other places of Allah's (ﷻ) Book.</p> <p>There are five famous opinions on whether the <i>basmallah</i> is one of the āyahs of the Qur'an or not:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The <i>basmallah</i> is an āyah from the āyāt of the Qur'an. 2. The <i>basmallah</i> is not an āyah at the beginning of each sūrah, rather it is present as a means of earning blessings. 3. The <i>basmallah</i> is only an āyah at the beginning of <i>Sūrat al-Fātiḥa</i>, and in all other places is used only to separate one sūrah from the next. 4. The <i>basmallah</i> is an āyah of the Qur'an according to some <i>qirā'āt</i> (modes of recitation), and not an āyah according to other <i>qirā'āt</i>. 5. The <i>basmallah</i> is an independent āyah that exists at the beginning of each sūrah but not as part of that sūrah. <p>The evidence below will illustrate that the strongest opinion is opinion 5, and Allah knows best.</p>

Theoretical evidence supporting opinion 5	The scholars who hold this view state that the writing of the <i>basmallah</i> in the same Qur’anic font (<i>al-rasm al-‘Uthmāni</i>) is evidence that it is a part of the Qur’an.
	Furthermore the <i>basmallah</i> has been placed independently before the sūrahs it precedes, proving it is an entity in its own right and not part of the sūrahs.
Evidence from the Sunnah supporting opinion 5	a. The Prophet said: “Indeed there is a sūrah in the Qur’an which consists of 30 verses. These āyāt will intercede on behalf of its reciter until he is forgiven, and it is <i>Sūrat al-Mulk</i> (Q. 67).” [Ḥadīth found in the Sunan (authentic) books of ḥadīth, it is regarded as ḥasan (sound) by al-Tirmidhī.]
	b. Also, after wakening from unconsciousness the Prophet said, “A sūrah was just revealed to me shortly”, and recited <i>Sūrat al-Kawthar</i> (Q. 108) [i.e. with the <i>basmallah</i>]. Reported in Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ.
	c. Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) related that that Allah’s messenger once said that Allah said “I have divided up the salāh between My servant and Myself; one half is for him and the other half is for Me, and My servant will get whatever he asks for”; [i.e. the <i>basmalla</i> is not referred to as the first āyah]. [Reported in Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ.]
	d. The famous ḥadīth of b. ‘Abbās in which the beginning of <i>waḥī</i> (revelation) is described. This ḥadīth reports that Jibrīl came to the Prophet and recited: <i>Sūrat al-‘Alaq</i> , 96:1–5 [i.e. he did not start with the <i>basmallah</i>].
	e. Anas reported that he offered salāh behind the Prophet, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, and all of them commenced their salāh with “ <i>al-ḥamdu li...</i> ” (i.e. they did not recite <i>basmallah</i> aloud as part of sūrah.) [Recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and part of it is found in Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī.]

There are no contradictions within our pure Shari’ah; the contradiction or inconsistency is always in the reasoning of the researcher.

Does this difference of opinion bare any fruits within the realm of Islamic Legislation?

The Disjointed Letters (*hurūf al-muqattaʿāt*)



¹. *Alif-Lām-Rā...**

*[These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an, and none but Allah knows their meanings.]

<p><i>Hurūf al-muqattaʿāt</i> (the disjointed letters)</p>	<p><i>Hurūf al-Muqattaʿāt</i> are unique letter combinations that begin certain sūrahs of the Qur'an. These letters are written together as if to make up a word, but each letter is pronounced separately.</p> <p>Of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, exactly one half appear as <i>muqattaʿāt</i>, either singly or in combinations of two, three, four or five. The fourteen letters are:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">أ ح ر س ص ط ع ق ك ل م ن ه ي</p> <p><i>yā, ḥā, nūn, mīm, lām, kāf, qāf, ʿayn, ṭā, ṣād, sīn, rā, ḥā, alif.</i></p> <p>The most common of the 14 letters is <i>mīm</i>, which appears in 17 sūrahs. The least common are the <i>kāf</i> and <i>nūn</i>; each occurring only once.</p>
<p>What is the meaning and purpose of these letters?</p>	<p>There are several views regarding the meanings of these disjointed letters. Some views are considered acceptable and others are unacceptable. Some of the views mentioned by the scholars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These letters are from the unclear āyāt (<i>mutashābihāt</i>) of the Qur'an and their true (inner) meaning is only known to Allah <p>Other āyāt referred to as <i>mutashābih</i> are the āyāt that speak about Allah, the Heavens and the unseen, as their full meanings are obscure and unknowable.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. They serve the same purpose as other oaths in the Qur'an, similar to the āyāt: وَالْعَصْرِ; وَاللَّيْلِ; and وَالزَّيْتُونِ. <p>However, the <i>mufasssirūn</i> reject this view, stating that the Arabs never took oaths in this manner. They also never used single letters to indicate that an oath was being taken.</p>

	<p>3. These names are from the names of Allah, for example the letter <i>alif</i> stands for Allah, the letter <i>mīm</i> stands for Majīd (“the most Glorious”), the letter <i>lām</i> stands for Latīf (“the most Courteous and Subtle”), and so on.</p>
	<p>4. They stand for specific meanings.</p> <p>For example, the letters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • اَلَمْ represents the statement ‘I Allah know.’ • the letter ق means “<i>al-Qur’ān</i>” or “<i>quḍiya’l-amr</i>” (the matter has [already] been decided / destined). • It was a practice of the Arabs to speak at times using letters instead of words. The following couplet of Arabic poetry mentioned by b. Fāris (d. 395 AH) illustrates this: <i>“Qulnā lahā: qifī, faqālat: qāf”.</i> “We said to her stop, and she said ‘qāf’” [Short for <i>waqaftu</i> ‘I have stopped’].
	<p>5. They are names of sūrahs; thus it is possible to say <i>Sūrat Ya-Sīn</i>, <i>Sūrat Qāf</i>, <i>Sūrat Ṭā-Hā</i>, etc.</p>
	<p>6. They serve as a reference to the other half of the Arabic alphabet, thus reminding the Arabs of the superior nature of the Qur’an, given that it was revealed using their letters and words, and yet cannot be imitated in its style and prose.</p>
	<p>Conclusion:</p>

الرَّ تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ
هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٣﴾

¹ Alif-Lām-Rā. ²These are the verses of the clear Book. Indeed, ³We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand. We relate to you, [O Muhammad], the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Qur'an although you were, before it, among the unaware.

تِلْكَ	This demonstrative noun is used to point to something far away from the speaker, emphasising the Qur'an is being revealed from the Protected Tablet (<i>al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz</i>).
الْمُبِينِ	Here Allah describes the Qur'an as "clear".
إِنَّا	This is analogous to what in English is called the "royal we". It does not mean that Allah is more than one. It is a feature of literary style in Arabic that a person may refer to himself by the pronoun <i>nahnu</i> (we) for respect or glorification. He may also use the word <i>anā</i> (I), indicating one person, or the third person <i>huwa</i> (he). All three styles are used in the Qur'an [see <i>Fatāwa al-Lajnah al-Dā'imah</i> , 4/143].
أَنْزَلْنَاهُ	

قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا	Allah affirms and explains to us here that the language of the Qur'an is Arabic. From this the following points can be inferred:
	a) Translations of the Qur'an into other than the Arabic language are not termed 'al-Qur'an'.
	b) An explanation of the Qur'an in the Arabic language is not termed 'al-Qur'an'.
	c) The Islamic legislative rulings that are specific to the Qur'an do not apply to translations and explanations of the Qur'an.
	<p>d) The Arabic language deserves to be revered as it is the chosen medium of preservation for the revelation of Allah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>And thus We have revealed it as an Arabic legislation. And if you should follow their inclinations after what has come to you of knowledge, you would not have against Allah any ally or any protector. [Sūrat al-Ra'd, 13:37]</i> ♦ <i>And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an and have diversified therein the warnings that perhaps they will avoid [sin] or it would cause them remembrance. [Sūrat Tāhā, 20:113]</i> ♦ <i>[It is] an Arabic Qur'an, without any deviance that they might become righteous. [Sūrat al-Zumar, 39:28]</i> ♦ <i>Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand. [Sūrat Zukhruf, 43:3]</i> ♦ <i>And before it was the scripture of Mūsa to lead and as a mercy. And this is a confirming Book in an Arabic tongue to warn those who have wronged and as good tidings to the doers of good. [Sūrat al-Ahqāf, 46:12]</i>

The argument about whether the Qur'an is only Arabic has been a cause of controversy among the scholars of Islam.	
Unanimous Agreement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That there are no non-Arabic sentences in the Qur'an; 2. That there are non-Arabic proper nouns in the Qur'an: e.g. ʿĪsa (عيسى), Jibrāʾīl (جبرائيل), Mūsā (موسى), Nūḥ (نوح).
Disagreement (ikhtilāf)	<p>The scholars differed with regards to the presence of single foreign words in the Qur'an, the three famous opinions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no foreign words in the Qur'an. 2. There are foreign words in the Qur'an. 3. A middle view states that the origins of some Arabic words are foreign; however these words have been assimilated into Arabic and 'Arabicised', their original letters being replaced with Arabic letters and made part of the Arabic language. Moreover, they were being used in Arabic poetry and speech, even before the Qur'an was revealed. This is the strongest view; and Allah knows best.

Class Discussion

- ❖ Discrediting Islam as a universal *dīn* based on deviant views that the Prophet was exclusively sent to the Arabs because of the Arabic nature of the Qur'an.
- ❖ _____
- ❖ Allah (ﷻ) says:

It is He who has sent among the unlettered[Arabs] a messenger [Muḥammad] from among themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book [i.e., the Qur'an] and wisdom, [i.e., the Sunnah]-although they were before in clear error-

[Sūrat al-Jumu'ah, 62: 2]

<p>لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ</p>	<p>Allah (ﷻ) further explains that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic so that it may be understood.</p> <p>The Qur'an was not revealed merely to be recited; or simply to take enjoyment from it; or for mere memorisation. In many āyāt Allah warns against those who do not try to understand the Qur'an.</p> <p>Allah says in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, ; they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless. [Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, 7:179]</i> • <i>And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall upon them deaf and blind. [Sūrat al-Furqān, 25:73]</i> • <i>And they said, 'Our hearts are wrapped.' But, [in fact], Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so little is it that they believe. [Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:88]</i>
<p>أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ</p>	<p>The Qur'an consists of the best stories, and among them is the story of Yūsuf.</p> <p>Why is <i>Sūrat Yūsuf</i> described as the best of all stories?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____