

1.4 Stories in The Qur'an

Main Topics Covered

- **A Special Format for Stories in the Quran** (0:00 to 1:12)
- **Why are Stories not Complete?** (1:12 to 2:32)
- **Learning Through Stories** (2:32 to 3:35)
- **The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad** (3:35 to 4:55)
- **Why are Names not Mentioned?** (4:55 to 7:27)
- **Numbers, Years & Other Details** (7:27 to 8:51)
- **What to Ask About?** (8:51 to 10:00)

This module is on how to read the Quran in terms of its stories. Stories are a major component of the Quran. Much of the Quran is referring to stories, yet the mention of stories in the Quran has a particular format that we need to understand.

Stories are not mentioned in total, like a story from the beginning to the end in one chapter, except for surat Yusuf (peace be upon him). The story of Prophet Yusuf is mentioned in the surah that is titled after his name, yet he is mentioned in two other places in the Quran.

The stories of other Prophets are mentioned in different parts of the Quran in different scenes. And sometimes in the same scene but different people speaking or different angle to look at the same scene.

Why Are the Stories Not Complete?

Why are the stories like that?

Because **every chapter is a journey**, and the scene that is picked from the story is actually fitting the journey of the surah. So, if the surah is talking about the rules of dos and don'ts, then you find the part of the stories of the Prophets that have to do with the laws and the rules.

A chapter that is talking about tyranny and struggle against it and saying truth to power... so then, you will find that the bit of the Prophet Abraham's story, a bit of Moses' story, and a bit of Prophet Jesus' story about saying truth to power is there, because that is the theme of the chapter.

Therefore, when you would like to understand the story of one of the Prophets, or a story of one of the people other than the Prophets: Luqman, the teacher of Moses or others, then you need to gather the different parts of the story unless it's mentioned in one particular part, and make a whole picture of that story.

Learning Through Stories

It's important though to know that the storytelling in the Quran is **one of the main educational tools of that book**. It will take you from a certain set of values to a different set of values.

You learn chastity by reading about Prophet Yusuf. You learn courage by reading about Abraham. You learn the values of devotion by reading about Mary. You learn about keenness to guide people and the dedication to the call by reading about Noah (peace be upon them all).

You learn about all of this by reading about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) because his story is about everything, of war and peace, of richness and poverty, of struggle against tyranny, and mercy to the poor and weak... A story of saying the truth and defending it.

The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad

[The Seerah](#), the story of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), is very important and very significant in the Quran.

When I am asked, "what is the best book of the seerah?" My first answer is "the Quran". Because what the Quran emphasizes are the most important parts of the seerah. And what the Quran does not emphasize, are perhaps less important or less significant.

The seerah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is written mostly around his battles, the political organization in Madinah, the struggle in Makkah, the messages to the different kings ...etc.

But the seerah in the Quran is different. The seerah in the Quran is about the man (peace be upon him), his values, his ethos and his faith, his family, how he dealt with his companions, how merciful he is and how keen he is to guide the people, and how much he is sad because people are not following that truth...

The books of seerah do not focus on this much because they are written in the style of history, that is a usual style of focusing on the military and political side of the history.

Why Are Names Not Mentioned?

But the seerah in the Quran is the best account of the story of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companions and his wives... Yet you find that no names were mentioned, for example, in the seerah of Prophet Muhammad, or in some of the stories of the other messengers.

Why?

Because the mentioning of the names are for purposes. The only name of the companions is mentioned is Zayd. Why?

Because Zayd is a “son” that Prophet Muhammad adopted, and then Allah said that adoption in Islam has a different meaning: You can raise a child like your son, but you can’t name him after you.

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah. (Quran [33:5](#))

Zayd’s name was mentioned because he was named “Zayd son of Muhammad”, and Allah wanted to correct that. He’s actually Zayd son of Harithah, not son of Muhammad; don’t corrupt the lineage of people. But otherwise the names of the companions were not as important and significant as what they did.

Therefore, when Abu Bakr was mentioned in the cave with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Allah said “his companion”.

Ali was mentioned in a couple of places when he gave charity, his name is not as significant as his heroic actions. And so is Umar, and so is Aisha, Khadijah, Umm Salamah... and all of the companions, males and females, are referred to in the Quran by their attributes and what we learn from them and not necessarily by their names.

Similarly, the Prophets, Allah mentioned the names of some: Abraham, Saleh, Hud, Noah, and Ilyas... but He also mentioned the stories of some without the names, like the story in Surat Ya-Sin, and the story in Surat Al A’raf and others, where the Prophets stories are mentioned but the names are not given. Why?

Because **the names are not the important part, are not the rationale of the story.** The point behind the story is what the story is telling you about values, about beliefs... and not necessarily the name.

Numbers, Years & Other Details

Also, the numbers and years... Human history is fascinated with years and numbers, but the Quran is not saying that. The Quran in fact, is saying do not argue about numbers when it comes to the stories of the Quran:

They will say there were three, the fourth of them being their dog; and they will say there were five, the sixth of them being their dog – guessing at the unseen. (Quran [18:22](#))

The color of the cow is not important. The story of the cow is very significant and a major story that we should learn from.

In the beginning of the Quran in Chapter 2, when Moses told some people of the Children of Israel to slaughter a cow, they argued about the color of the cow...

The story of the cow is about obeying Allah. And Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) commented:

Had they slaughtered any cow from the beginning, it would have been enough for them. But they argued about the cow.

What to Ask About?

So many of the stories have this kind of angle of **teaching us lessons, what to ask about and what not to ask about**, how to ask and how to explore. And what is exactly important in history. It is not about the dates, the buildings, and architecture... Allah is mentioning that architecture in the sense of being good or evil depending on what people do with it.

If they are so happy with their science and architecture and they corrupt earth, Allah punishes them. Yet if they use their technology and their wealth in good ways, then Allah rewards them and they live a good life.

So that is the morale of the story and that is more important than the dates and the type of architecture that people develop.

So, the stories of the Quran are very important themes and one of the good entries actually to learn about the Quran.

If we focus on the stories and integrate them, we will learn so much about Islam and what the message of the Quran is about.

We ask Allah to guide us and to forgive us.