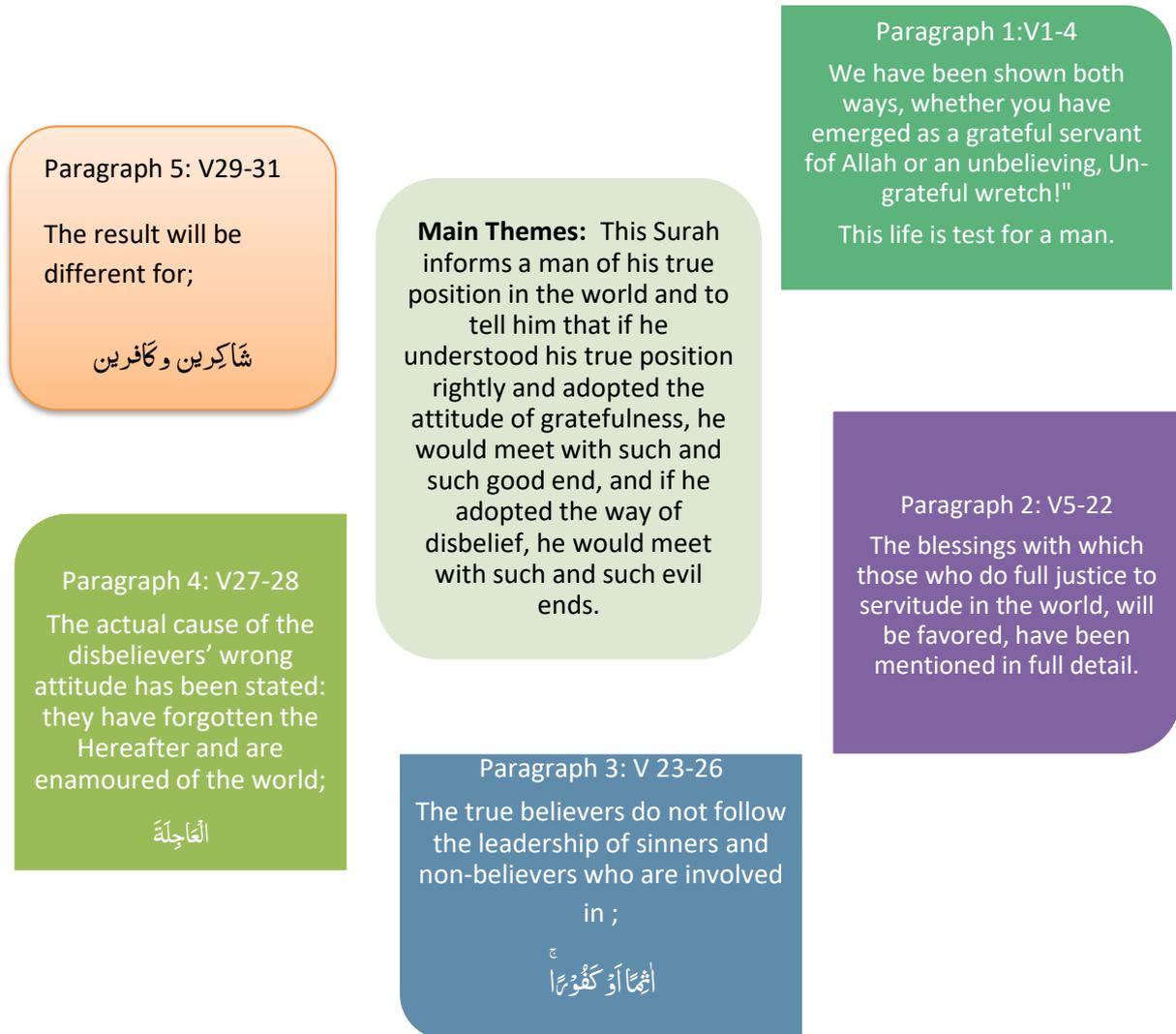


## Flow Chart

## Macro Structure

76. Surah Al Insan (Man), also known as Surah Ad Dahr (Time)

Verses: 31; Makki; Paragraphs: 5



**Period of Revelation:** Most of the commentators, including Allama Zamakhshari, Imam Razi, Qadi, Baidawi, Allama Nizam ad-Din Nisaburi, Hafiz Ibn Kathir and many others, regard it as a Makki Surah, and, according to Allama Alusi, the same is the opinion of the majority of scholars. However, some commentators hold the view that the Surah was revealed at Madinah, and some others say that it was revealed at Makkah but vv. 8-10 of it were sent down at Madinah.

As far as the subject matter and the style of the Surah are concerned, these are very different from those of the Madani Surahs. A little study of it rather shown that it is not only a Makki Surah but it was revealed during the earliest period at Makkah, which began just after the revelation of the first seven verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir. As for vv 8-10, they are so naturally set in the theme of the Surah that if they are read in their proper context, no one can say that the theme preceding and following them had been sent down 15 to 16 years earlier but these three verses which were revealed many years later were inserted here unnaturally.

In fact, the basis of the idea that this Surah; or some verses of it were revealed at Madinah, is a tradition which has related from Ibn Abbas (may Allah bless him). He says that once Hadrat Hasan and Husain fell ill The Holy Prophet and some of his Companions visited them. They wished Hadrat Ali to make a vow to Allah for the recovery of the two children. Thereupon, Hadrat Ali, Hadrat Fatimah and Fiddah their maid servant, vowed a fast of three days if Allah restored the children to health. The children recovered by the grace of Allah and the three of them began to fast as avowed. As there was nothing to eat in the house, Hadrat Ali borrowed three measures (sa') of barley from somebody (according to another tradition, earned through labor). When on the first day they sat down to eat after breaking the fast, a poor man came and begged for food. They gave all their food to him, drank water and retired to bed. The next day when they again sat down to eat after breaking the fast, an orphan came and begged for something. They again gave away the whole food to him, drank water and went to bed. On the third day when they were just going to eat after breaking the fast, a captive came up and begged for food likewise. Again the whole food was given away to him. On the fourth day Hadrat Ali took both the children with him and went before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) seeing the weak condition of the three, returned with them to the house of Hadrat Fatimah and found her lying in a corner half dead with hunger. This moved him visibly. In the meantime the Angel Gabriel (peace be on him) came and said; "Look, Allah has congratulated you on the virtues of the people of your house!" When the Holy Prophet asked what it was, he recited this whole Surah in response. (According to Ibn Mahran's tradition, he recited it from verse 5 till the end. But the tradition which Ibn Marduyah has related from Ibn Abbas only says that the verse *Wa yut'imun-at ta'am...* was sent down concerning Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah; there is no mention of this story in it). This whole story has been narrated by Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi in his Commentary of the Qur'an, entitled *Al'Basit*, and probably from the same it has been taken by Zamakhshari, Razi, Nisaburi and others.

In the first place, this tradition is very weak as regards its chain of transmission. Then, from the point of view of its subject matter also, it is strange that when a poor man, or an orphan, or a captive, comes to beg for food, he is given all the food. He could be given one member's food and the five of them could share the rest of it among themselves: Then this also is incredible that illustrious persons like Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah, who possessed perfect knowledge of Islam, should have regarded it as an act of virtue to keep the two children, who had just recovered their health and were still weak, hungry for three consecutive days. Moreover, in respect of the captives also, it has never been a practice under the Islamic government that they should be left to beg for food for themselves. For if they were prisoners of the government, the government itself was responsible to arrange food and clothing for them, and if they were in an individual's custody, he was made responsible to feed and clothe them. Therefore, it was not possible that in Madinah a captive should have gone about begging food from door to door. However, overlooking the weaknesses of transmission and the probability of subject matter, even if the narrative is accepted as it goes, at the most what it shows is that when the people of the Holy Prophet's house acted righteously as they did, Gabriel came and gave him the good news that Allah had much appreciated their act of virtue, for they had acted precisely in the righteous way that Allah had commanded in these verses of Surah Ad-Dahr. This does not necessitate that these verses too were sent down on that very occasion. The same is the case with many traditions concerning the occasion of revelation. When about a certain verse it is said that it was sent down on a particular occasion, it in fact does not mean that the verse was sent down on the very occasion the incident took place. But it means that the verse applies precisely and exactly to the incident. Imam Suyuti in *Al-Itqan* has quoted this from Hafiz Ibn Taimiyyah: "When the reporters say that a verse was sent down concerning a particular incident, it sometimes implies that the same incident (or matter) occasioned its revelation, and sometimes that the verse applies to the matter although it may not have occasioned its revelation." Further on he quotes Imam Badr ad-Din Zarkashi's view from his *Al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Quran*: "It is well known in respect of the Companions and their immediate successors that when one of them says that a verse was sent down concerning a particular matter, it means that the ruling contained in it applied to that matter and not that the matter itself occasioned the revelation of the verse. Thus, it only uses the ruling of the verse for the purpose of reasoning and not for stating a fact." (*Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Quran*, vol. I, p. 31, Ed. 1929).