

Fast 14

Chapter 94: The Expansion

This is a very early revelation, in which God says to the Holy Prophet:

¹Have We not expanded for you your breast (with Divine light and wisdom), ²and removed from you your burden, ³which weighed down your back, ⁴and exalted for you your mention? ⁵Surely with difficulty is ease, ⁶with difficulty is surely ease. ⁷So when you are free (from anxiety), work hard, ⁸and make your Lord your exclusive object.

Notes:

Verse 1–3: The *expanding of the breast* signifies its illumination with wisdom and Divine light, and filling with tranquillity. It stands for the greatness and the breadth of the heart of the Holy Prophet. When given his mission of reform of humanity, the Holy Prophet felt it as an unbearable burden and his heart was uneasy and anxious about it. But God filled his heart with light, tranquillity and knowledge. This, so to speak, expanded his breast. It brought him relief and comfort, lifting his burden, and gave him confidence. He became capable of understanding the most subtle of concepts and encompassing the broadest range of spiritual knowledge. This was necessary as he had to preach to the entire world, in which there was prevailing a wide range of religions and philosophies.

Verse 4: When all these verses revealed, he was an ordinary, obscure man of no importance, in whom no one was interested. As promised here, *his mention was exalted*. His name spread all over the world, and people became keen to find out every detail of his life and work, millions of them wanting to take his character as an example. From being least known, he became the best known person in the world, known for his high character and morals, reform work and founding a great religion. This verse indicates that Muslims must strive their hardest to make the Holy Prophet's name exalted in the world by presenting the true picture of life and refuting allegations against him.

Verses 5–6: It is twice stated that difficulty is followed by ease. This came true during the mission of the Holy Prophet, that the period of difficulty and adversity for him and his followers led to the period of ease. The same statement is repeated, and this indicates a prophecy (yet to be fulfilled) that when Islam is again in difficulty, that condition will give way to ease. But what can sustain us during that period of intense difficulty, when we bear the crushing burden of the task of presenting the true picture of Islam to the world? What can sustain us is: if our hearts are filled and stretched with the correct knowledge of Islam, and filled with Divine light through worship of Allah.

Verses 7–8: These instructions guide us as to what to do when we reach the period of ease. We must continue to work hard, to avoid falling into the ways of laxity and luxury that lead

to decline, and we must continue to turn to God since the temptation in easy circumstances is to forget Him. Thus the Holy Prophet, even when he reached the height of rulership over an entire nation and having tens of thousands of devoted followers, continued to lead the same life of austerity, hard work and service of God and humanity, as he had always done.
