

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Mursalāt*, 77.

This Sūra belongs to the early Makkan period, somewhere near to S. lxxv. (*Al-Qiyāmat*). The theme is somewhat similar. It denounces the horrors of the Hereafter, for those who rejected Truth. The refrain, "Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!" which occurs ten times in its fifty verses, or, on an average, once in every five verses, indicates the *leitmotif*.

Al-Mursalāt, or Those Sent Forth.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. By the (Winds) Sent Forth⁵⁸⁶³
One after another
(To man's profit);⁵⁸⁶⁴
2. Which then blow voiently
In tempestuous Gusts,⁵⁸⁶⁵
3. And scatter (things)
Far and wide;
4. Then separate them,
One from another,



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ عُرْفًا ١

فَالْعَصْفَاتِ عَصْفًا ٢

وَالنَّشْرِتِ نَشْرًا ٣

فَالْفَرْقَتِ فَرْقًا ٤

5863. This Sūra begins with an appeal to five things, as pointing to the substantive statement in verse 7, that the Day of Justice and Judgment is bound to come, and we must prepare for it. It is difficult to translate, but easy to understand, if we remember that a triple thread of allegory runs through this passage (verses 1-7). The five things or phases, which will be presently considered in detail, refer to (a) Winds in the physical world, (b) Angels in the Kingdom of Allah, and (c) Prophets in the human world, connecting it with the Kingdom of Allah.

5864. Understanding the reference to Winds, we can see that they are powerful factors in the government of the physical world. (1) They come gently as harbingers of the blessings of rain and fertility (xv. 22; xxx. 48); but (2) they can come as violent tornadoes, uprooting and destroying (li. 41-42); (3) they can scatter seeds far and wide, and (4) they can separate chaff from grain, or clear the air from epidemics; and (5) they literally carry sound, and therefore Messages. All these things point to the power and goodness of Allah, and we are asked to believe that His promise of Mercy and Justice in the Hereafter is indeed true.

Cf. this passage with li. 1-6 (*Zāriyāt*) with which it has many affinities.

5865. If we understand the reference to be, not to Winds, but to Angels, they are agencies in the Kingdom of Allah, which carry out similar functions, changing and revolutionising the face of the world. (1) They come softly, on beneficent errands of Mercy; (2) they are charged with the mission of punishment and destruction for sin as in the case of the two angels who came to Lūt (xv. 57-66); (3) they distribute Allah's Mercies as the Winds distribute good seeds; (4) they sort out the good from the evil among men; and (5) they are the agency through which Allah's Messages and Revelations are conveyed to the Prophets (see No. 5 in the last note).

5. Then spread abroad
A Reminder,⁵⁸⁶⁶
6. Whether of Justification
Or of Warning;—
7. Assuredly, what ye are
Promised must come to pass.
8. Then when the stars
Become dim;⁵⁸⁶⁷
9. When the heaven
Is cleft asunder;
10. When the mountains are
Scattered (to the winds) as dust;
11. And when the messengers
Are (all) appointed a time
(To collect);—⁵⁸⁶⁸

فَالْمَلَقِيتَ ذِكْرًا ﴿٥﴾

عَذْرًا أَوْ تَنْذَرًا ﴿٦﴾

إِنَّمَا تَعِدُّونَ لَوَاقِعَ ﴿٧﴾

فَإِذَا النُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ ﴿٨﴾

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ ﴿٩﴾

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُفِفَتْ ﴿١٠﴾

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقِنَّتْ ﴿١١﴾

5866. If we understand the reference to Prophets or Messengers of Allah, or the verses of Revelation which would be particularly appropriate for verses 5-6, we also get a satisfactory solution of the Allegory. (1) The Prophets have followed one another in a series: the verses of the Qur-ān came, one after another as needed; in both cases it was for man's spiritual profit; (2) they caused great disturbance in a spiritual decadent world; they pulled down evil institutions root and branch, and substituted new ones; (3) they proclaimed their truths far and wide, without fear and without favour; (4) through them were sorted out men of Faith and rebels against Allah's Law; and (5) they gave a Message, through which just men were justified through repentance, and evil men were warned of their sins.

Some Commentators take one or other of these allegories, and some apply one allegory to a few of these verses, and another to another few. In my opinion the Allegory is wide enough to comprehend all the meanings which I have sketched. I wish a translation could do justice to those marvellously terse sentences in the original.

5867. The lustre of the stars will become dim; in fact they will disappear: cf. lxxxii. 2, and lxxxii. 2. The heaven's canopy will be torn asunder: cf. lxxxii. 1, and lxxxiii. 18. The mountains will be uprooted and fly about like dust: cf. lxix. 14; lxxxii. 3; etc. All the old landmarks of the physical world as we know it will be swept away.

5868. The Resurrection will be established. In the world which will then have passed away, inspired Prophets had been sent in succession at different times to all nations. Now they will be gathered together in one place before the Judgment-seat to bear witness as to the righteous or the evil ones within their respective spheres of work. Cf. xxxix. 69.

12. For what Day are these
(Portents) deferred?

لَا يَوْمَ أُخِّلَتْ ﴿١٢﴾

13. For the Day of Sorting out.⁵⁸⁶⁹

لِيَوْمِ الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٣﴾

14. And what will explain
To thee what is
The Day of Sorting out?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٤﴾

15. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

16. Did We not destroy
The men of old⁵⁸⁷⁰
(For their evil)?

أَلَمْ تَهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

17. So shall We make
Later (generations)
Follow them.

ثُمَّ نَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. Thus do We deal
With men of sin.

كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

19. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

20. Have We not created
You from a fluid
(Held) despicable?—⁵⁸⁷¹

أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَّاءٍ مَهِينٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

5869. Cf. xxxvii. 21 and n. 4047; also xlv. 40, and n. 4718. That will be the Day of Judgment or Day of Decision. Good will then be completely separated from Evil. And the men who rejected Truth and flourished on Falsehood will find that in the world of Realities they will be absolutely nowhere. Hence the refrain of this Sūra. "Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!" it sounds like a dirge on Sin.

5870. Allah's Law is always the same. Sin or corruption prepares its own destruction. It was so with the generation of Noah. In Arab tradition it was so with the 'Ād and the Thamūd. In our own day we see relics of prehistoric civilisations, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and the Ægean: these were men of wonderful skill and resource, but they went under. If our generations, which pride themselves on their science and skill, desert Allah's Law, they will be certain to meet the same fate.

5871. Cf. xxxii. 8, n. 3638. Man is ashamed of the process of physical creation, by which he comes into being. Yet he is arrogant in life and neglectful of the Future.

21. The which We placed
In a place of rest,
Firmly fixed,⁵⁸⁷²
22. For a period (of gestation),
Determined?⁵⁸⁷³
23. For We do determine
For We⁵⁸⁷⁴
Are the Best to determine (things).
24. Ah woe, that Day!
To the Rejecters of Truth!
25. Have We not made
The earth (as a place)
To draw together
26. The living and the dead,⁵⁸⁷⁵
27. And made therein
Mountains standing firm,⁵⁸⁷⁶

فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

إِلَى قَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

وَيَلْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

أَلَمْ تَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِهَاتَا ﴿٢٥﴾

أَحْيَاءَ وَأَمْوَاتَا ﴿٢٦﴾

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رُوسًا شَمِخَاتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ

5872. See n. 2873 to xxiii. 13. The silent growth in the mother's womb, and the protection and sustenance which the growing life receives from the life of the mother, are themselves wonders of creation.

5873. The period roughly of nine months and ten days is subject to many adjustments. In fact throughout our pre-natal as well as post-natal life there are wonderful and nicely-balanced adjustments of which we are ourselves unconscious. Should we not turn in love and gratitude to Allah our Creator?

5874. Perhaps the life in the womb, in relation to the life after birth, is an allegory for our probationary life on earth in relation to the eternal Life to come. Perhaps, also, our state when we are buried in the tomb suggests an allegory to the life in the womb, in relation to the life in the Hereafter.

5875. What a wonderful parable! The earth is a place where death and life, decay and growth and decay, green grass, stubble, and fuel, corruption and purification jostle together,—one often leading to the other. The drama which we see with our own eyes in this world should enable us to appreciate the wonders in the Kingdom of Allah where the despised and rejected receive the highest honour, Lazarus rests in Abraham's bosom, and the Pharaoh is led in chains for his arrogance and his sin.

5876. See n. 2038 to xvi. 15. The solid mountains are frequently referred to: cf. xiii. 3. The parable here is that the mountains are hard, solid rock, and yet they act as sponges to collect, store up, and filter sweet and wholesome water, which on account of their altitude they are able to distribute by gravity to the lower, dry land by means of rivers =

Lofty (in stature);
And provided for you
Water sweet (and wholesome)?

مَاءٌ فُرَاتًا ﴿٧٧﴾

28. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَلَيْلٌ يُومِذُ لِلشَّكَّارِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

29. (It will be said:)
"Depart ye to that
Which ye used to reject
As false!

أَنْطَلِقُوا إِلَى مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

30. "Depart ye to a Shadow⁵⁸⁷⁷
(Of smoke ascending)
In three columns,

أَنْطَلِقُوا إِلَى ظِلٍّ ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ ﴿٨٠﴾

31. "(Which yields) no shade
Of coolness, and is
Of no use against
The fierce Blaze.

لَا ظِلِيلٌ وَلَا يُبْقِي مِنَ الْهَبِّ ﴿٨١﴾

32. "Indeed it throws about
Sparks (huge) as Forts,⁵⁸⁷⁸

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ ﴿٨٢﴾

33. "As if there were
(A string of) yellow camels
(Marching swiftly)."⁵⁸⁷⁹

كَأَنَّهُمْ جُمِلَتِ صُفْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾

= or springs. Any one who has seen the parched Makkan valleys and the delicious springs in the mountains around, or the Zubaida Canal, which used to be the main source of Makkah's water-supply, will appreciate the aptness of the metaphor, but it applies to any country, though not to so striking a degree. If the wisdom and power of Allah can do such things before your eyes, how can you reject His teaching of a still more wonderful future Life?

5877. The Sinners, instead of reposing in cool shades, will only see the blazing Fire. The only shadow they will see will be that of Smoke, ascending in three columns, right, left, and above, *i.e.*, completely enveloping them. But it will give no comfort or coolness. On the contrary, it will contain huge sparks.

5878. *Qasr*: Fort, big building, palace. An alternative reading is *Qasar*, plural of *Qasarat* (-un), meaning bundles of wood used for fuel: Ibn 'Abbās *apud* Bukhārī. I almost prefer this latter reading.

5879. The yellow sparks flying swiftly one after another suggest a string of camels marching swiftly, such as the Arabs of Nejd and central Arabia are so proud of. There is a double allegory. It refers not only to the colour and the rapid succession of sparks, =

34. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. That will be a Day
When they shall not
Be able to speak,⁵⁸⁸⁰

هَذَا يَوْمٌ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36. Nor will it be
Open to them
To put forth pleas.

وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

37. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

38. That will be a Day
Of Sorting out! We shall
Gather you together
And those before (you)!⁵⁸⁸¹

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمَعْتُمْكُمْ وَالْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

39. Now, if ye have
A trick (or plot),
Use it against Me!⁵⁸⁸²

فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

40. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

= but to the vanity of worldly pride, as much as to say: "your fine yellow camels in which you took such pride in the world are but sparks that fly away and even sting you in the Hereafter!" Smoke with sparks may also assume fantastic shapes like long-necked camels.

5880. They will be dumbfounded; *i.e.*, (when read with the next verse), they will not be in a position to put forward any valid defence or plea. Facts will speak too plainly against them. They might perversely try to deny false worship: vi. 23: but their own tongues and limbs will bear witness against them: xxiv. 24. Nor does the fighting out or settling of doctrinal disputes in the Hereafter (xxxix. 31) amount to putting forward pleas in defence.

5881. We may suppose this as spoken primarily to the Quraish who were plotting against the Prophet. You may use all your wisdom and that of your ancestors, but you will not be able to defeat Allah or His Plan. See next verse.

5882. The plots against the holy Prophet were plots against Allah's Truth, and therefore against Allah. Can any one hope to profit by such plots? Can any one defeat Allah's Plan and Purpose? Let them try. They will only ruin themselves, as the Pagan leaders did. There can only be pity for such men. What will be their state in the Hereafter? "Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Allah's Truth!"

SECTION 2.

41. As to the Righteous,
They shall be amidst
(Cool) shades and springs
(Of water).⁵⁸⁸³
42. And (they shall have)
Fruits,—all they desire.⁵⁸⁸⁴
43. "Eat ye and drink ye
To your heart's content:
For that ye worked
(Righteousness).⁵⁸⁸⁵
44. Thus do We certainly
Reward the Doers of Good.
45. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!
46. (O ye Unjust!)
Eat ye and enjoy yourselves
(But) a little while,⁵⁸⁸⁶
For that ye are Sinners.
47. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلِّلٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥١﴾

وَفَوَاحِهِ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

وَلَيْلٌ يُومَدُ لِلْمَكْذِبِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

كُلُوا وَتَمَنَعُوا لِقَائِ الْإِثْمِ تُجْرَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

وَلَيْلٌ يُومَدُ لِلْمَكْذِبِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

5883. This is in contrast to the triple shade of smoke and sin for the sinners, which neither gives them coolness nor protects them from the Blazing Fire. The Shade, i.e. Covering, of Allah's Good Pleasure, will be the greatest Boon of all, and the Spring of Allah's Love will be inexhaustible.

5884. *Fruits*: see n. 4671 to xliii. 73.

5885. The fruits of righteousness are contentment in this life and the supreme Bliss in the next.

5886. "Eat" is symbolical of having the good things of life in this world. It may be that they are only given for a trial. Because their minds and wishes run to wrong things, the opportunities for wrong are multiplied, as the impetus for good or for evil increases progressively. They are asked to believe and repent. But if they do not, they are to be pitied, even for the good things of this life, for they will come to an evil End in the Hereafter.

48. And when it is said
To them, "Prostrate yourselves!"
They do not so.⁵⁸⁸⁷

49. Ah woe, that Day,
To the Rejecters of Truth!

50. Then what Message,
After that,⁵⁸⁸⁸
Will they believe in?

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

وَبَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَكْذِبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

5887. Prostration is a symbol of humility and a desire to get nearer to Allah by Prayer and a good life. Those who refuse to adopt this Path are to be pitied: how will they fare at Judgment?

5888. "That" may refer to verse 48: they were given plain and clear Guidance, and they refused to accept it: after that what kind of Message will they accept? The Guidance referred to is obviously that of Islam or the Qur-ān.