

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Muzzammil*, 73.

This is one of the earliest Sūras to have been revealed. The first was S. xcvi. 1-5 (*Iqraa*), in the fortieth year of the Prophet's life, say about 12 years before the Hijra. Then there was an interruption (*Fatra*), of which the duration cannot be exactly ascertained, as there was no external history connected with it. The usual estimate puts it at about six months, but it may have been a year or two years. The years were then counted by the luni-solar calendar: see Appendix No. 6. The second Sūra in chronological order was probably a great portion of S. lxxviii. (*Al-Qalam*), which came after the *Fatra* was over. About the same time came this Sūra (say third) and S. lxxiv., which follows (say fourth), and the remainder of xcvi. We may roughly put the date of this Sūra at about 11 to 10 years before the Hijra.

The subject-matter is the significance of Prayer and Humility in spiritual life and the terrible fate of those who reject Faith and Revelation.

*Al-Muzzammil, or Folded in
Garments.*

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

1. O thou folded
In garments!⁵⁷⁵⁴
2. Stand (to prayer) by night,
But not all night,—⁵⁷⁵⁵
3. Half of it,—
Or a little less,
4. Or a little more;
And recite the Qur-ān⁵⁷⁵⁶
In slow, measured rhythmic tones.
5. Soon shall We send down
To thee a weighty Word.⁵⁷⁵⁷
6. Truly the rising by night
Is a time when impression

سُورَةُ الْمَزْمَلِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَزْمُولُ ﴿١﴾

قُمِ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢﴾

نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا ﴿٣﴾

أَوْزِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ أَنْ تَرْتِيلًا ﴿٤﴾

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا ﴿٥﴾

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأً وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا ﴿٦﴾

5754. *Muzzammil*: Some Commentators understand by this, "properly dressed for prayer", or "folded in a sheet, as one renouncing the vanities of this world. *Muzzammil* is one of the titles of our holy Prophet. But there is a deeper meaning in this and the address "Thou wrapped up" of the next Sūra. Human nature requires warm garments and wrappings to protect the body from cold or heat or rain. But in the spiritual world these wrappings are useless: the soul must stand bare and open before Allah, in the silence of the night, but not too austere, as the following verses show.

5755. The Prophet was prone to austerities in the cave of Hirāa, both before and after he received his mission, spending days and nights in prayer and contemplation. Midnight and after-midnight prayers have technically received the name of *Tahajjud*. See also verse 20 below; also xvii. 79.

5756. At this time there was only S. xcvi., S. lxxviii, and possibly S. lxxiv, and the opening Sūra (*Al-Hamd*). For us, now, with the whole of the Qur-ān before us, the injunction is specially necessary. The words of the Qur-ān must not be read hastily, merely to get through so much reading. They must be studied, and their deep meaning pondered over. They are themselves so beautiful that they must be lovingly pronounced in rhythmic tones.

5757. The Qur-ān as completed by degrees, after the *Fatra* (see Introduction to this Sūra).

Is more keen and speech⁵⁷⁵⁸
More certain.

7. True, there is for thee
By day prolonged occupation
With ordinary duties:⁵⁷⁵⁹

8. But keep in remembrance
The name of thy Lord,
And devote thyself
To Him whole-heartedly.

9. (He is) Lord of the East
And the West: there is
No god but He:
Take Him therefore
For (thy) Disposer of Affairs.⁵⁷⁶⁰

10. And have patience with what
They say, and leave them
With noble (dignity).

11. And leave Me
(Alone to deal with)
Those in possession of
The good things of life,⁵⁷⁶¹

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا ﴿٧﴾

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا ﴿٨﴾

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا ﴿٩﴾

وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَأَهْلِجْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا ﴿١٠﴾

وَذَرْنِي وَالْمُكَذِّبِينَ أُولِيَ النَّعْمَةِ وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيلًا ﴿١١﴾

5758. For contemplation, prayer, and praise, what time can be so suitable as the night, when calm and silence prevail, the voices of the market-place are still, and the silent stars pour forth their eloquence to the discerning soul.

5759. A prophet of Allah, as a man, a member of a family, or a citizen, has many ordinary duties to perform; and his work may be made difficult and irksome in protecting those who listen to his preaching and are therefore molested and persecuted by the world. But while discharging all his ordinary duties, he should work as in the presence of Allah, and in all matters and at all times retain the sense of Allah's nearness. His work may be on earth, but his heart is in Heaven.

5760. Allah is Lord of all places. He rules the world. Therefore be not discouraged by the plots or enmity of wicked men. Leave all things to Allah; trust Him; He is just and will do justice. Only turn away from the unjust, but in a worthy and noble way; i.e., to show them clearly that you do not fear them, but that you leave all affairs in Allah's hands. If we divide the world into hemispheres from north to south, "East and West" will cover all directions.

5761. Men who enjoy the good things of life have special cause for gratitude to Allah, Who bestowed them. When they are in the ranks of Allah's enemies, none but Allah can adequately deal with them.

(Who (yet) deny the Truth;)
And bear with them
For a little while.

12. With Us are Fetters⁵⁷⁶²
(To bind them), and a Fire⁵⁷⁶³
(To burn them),

13. And a Food that chokes,⁵⁷⁶⁴
And a Chastisement Grievous.⁵⁷⁶⁵

14. The Day the earth
And the mountains
Will be in violent commotion.
And the mountains will be
As a heap of sand
Poured out and flowing down.⁵⁷⁶⁶

15. We have sent to you,
(O men!) a Messenger,
To be a witness concerning you,⁵⁷⁶⁷

إِن لَّدَيْنَا أَنكَالٌ وَحِمَامٌ ﴿١٢﴾

وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣﴾

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ
كَيْبًا مَّهِيلًا ﴿١٤﴾

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ رَسُولًا شَهِدَا عَلَيْكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا
إِلَّا فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

5762. Cf. xiii. 5; xxxiv. 33; xl. 71 and lxix. 30-32.

5763. Cf. xlv. 47 and lvi. 94.

5764. Cf. xlv. 43; lvi. 52; lxix. 36-37, and lxxxviii. 6.

5765. In general terms, the Penalty of sin may be described as a Penalty Grievous, an Agony. It may come in this very life, but that in the Hereafter is certain! See next verse.

We can also consider punishments from another aspect. The first object of punishment is to protect the innocent from the depredations of the criminal: we have to bind him. The next object is to produce in his heart the fire of repentance, to consume his evil proclivities and to light his conscience. Where that is not enough, a more drastic punishment for the callous is something which causes him pain in things which ordinarily cause him pleasure, such as food, drink, and the satisfaction of physical needs. People in whom the higher spiritual faculties are dead may perchance be awakened through the lower physical features of their life, which appeal to them. Where this also fails, there is finally the complete Agony, a type too terrible to contemplate.

5766. The Judgment is described as a violent commotion which will change the whole face of nature as we know it. Even the hard rock of mountains will be like loose sand running without any cohesion.

5767. Our holy Prophet has to warn his age, i.e., the present age, reclaim it from sin, and be a witness for the righteous and against evil, as Moses did his office in his age. For Pharaoh, his arrogance, and his punishment, see x. 75-92.

Even as We sent
A messenger to Pharaoh.

16. But Pharaoh disobeyed⁵⁷⁶⁸
The messenger; so We
Seized him with
A heavy Punishment.

17. Then how shall ye,
If ye deny (Allah),
Guard yourselves against
A Day that will make
Children hoary-headed?—⁵⁷⁶⁹

18. Whereon the sky will be
Cleft asunder?
His Promise needs must
Be accomplished.

19. Verily this is an Admonition:⁵⁷⁷⁰
Therefore, whoso will, let him
Take a (straight) path
To his Lord!

فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُولَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيلًا ﴿١٦﴾

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِن كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ

الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا ﴿١٧﴾

السَّمَاءَ مَنفُطِرَةً ۖ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا ﴿١٨﴾

إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ مَوْعِدٌ كَرِهَ ٱلْمُنَٰفِكُونَ ۖ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ٱلتَّخَذِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ۗ

سَبِيلًا ﴿١٩﴾

5768. Pharaoh the earthly king faces Moses the prophet of Allah. In earthly eyes it was Moses who disobeyed Pharaoh. In spiritual relations, it was Pharaoh who disobeyed Moses. Pharaoh represented an ancient and mighty kingdom, with a long history behind it, and a pride in its learning and science, art, organisation, and power. Moses led a depressed people, hewers of wood and drawers of water. But the might of Allah was behind him. What became of the wisdom, power, and armies of Pharaoh? They were rent asunder when the day came, and the terror and surprise must have been the same as if the heavens had been rent asunder, and children's hair had turned grey! But formidable revolutions turn children grey-haired in another way. Nations that were as children became wise before they in their turn decayed, and from similar disobedience to the laws of Allah. For Allah's law must stand and be fulfilled when all else is swept away.

5769. If already you deny and disobey Allah in this life of probation, how can you stand up to the Day of Judgment, the Day of the terrible Reality? That Day is described in two metaphors: (1) It will be a time of such stress that even children will become like hoary-headed men; (2) What we look upon as the eternal sky, ever the same, will be cleft asunder; cf. lxxxii. 1. In other words, the shape of things will be completely altered, both within man and in outer nature, and all true values will be restored. For the Promise of Allah, in this as in all other respects, cannot but be fulfilled.

5770. This is no empty threat. It is an admonition for your good. If you have the will, you can at once come for the Grace and Mercy of Allah, and obtain it. For Repentance and Amendment are the straight Way to the nearness of Allah.

SECTION 2.

20. Thy Lord doth know
That thou standest forth
(To prayer) nigh two-thirds
Of the night, or half
The night, or a third⁵⁷⁷¹
Of the night, and so doth
A party of those with thee.
But Allah doth appoint Night
And Day in due measure.
He knoweth that ye are
Unable to keep count thereof.⁵⁷⁷²
So He hath turned to you
(In mercy): read ye,
Therefore, of the Qur-ān⁵⁷⁷³
As much as may be
Easy for you. He knoweth
That there may be (some)
Among you in ill-health;

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ
وَأَنَّهُ، وَطَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ
وَالنَّهَارَ عَلِيمٌ لِّأَنَّ تُخْصَوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكَ فَقَرَأْهُ
مَا تيسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ إِن عَلِمَ أَنَّ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكَ مَرَضٌ
وَأَخْرُوجُ يُضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَنْتَعُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِ
اللَّهِ وَأَخْرُوجُ يُقْتَلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَأَقْرَأْهُ
مَا تيسَّرَ مِنْهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ فَرَضًا حَسَنًا وَمَا تَفْدُوا لِنَفْسِكُمْ
مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ وَأَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا
وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

5771. Cf., above, lxxiii. 2-4. The Prophet, and a zealous band of his disciples, were often up, two-thirds of the night, or a half, or a third, rejecting sleep and giving themselves up to Prayer and Praise and the reading of the Qur-ān. They are told that this was too severe a tax on them, especially if their health was affected, or they were on a journey, or they were striving, with might and main, in other ways, for the cause of Allah. See the lines following.

5772. The usual meaning taken is that the counting of the exact hours of night and day may not be possible for ordinary people, in order to determine exactly the half, or the third, or the two-thirds of a night. The length of the night and the day varies every day of the solar year, and the precise hour of midnight can only be determined by exact observation in clear skies or by chronometers, which is not possible for everyone. But I understand it in a wider meaning. Allah fixes night and day in due proportions; for rest and work, and according to seasonal variations. For prayer and praise no meticulous observations of that kind are necessary or possible. Allah's service can be done in many ways as detailed below. But we must give some time to devotion, as may be most easy and convenient to us, in various circumstances of health, travel, and the performance of various duties.

5773. The reading of the Qur-ān here is a part of Prayer and religious devotion. This is not to be made into an obsession or a burden. Cf. xx. 2: "We have not sent down the Qur-ān to thee to be an occasion for thy distress." We must do it whole-mindedly, but not by formal mechanical computations.

Others travelling through the land,
 Seeking of Allah's bounty;
 Yet others fighting⁵⁷⁷⁴
 In Allah's Cause. Read ye,
 Therefore, as much of the Qur-ān
 As may be easy (for you);
 And establish regular Prayer
 And give zakat;
 And loan to Allah
 A Beautiful Loan.⁵⁷⁷⁵
 And whatever good
 Ye send forth
 For yourselves,⁵⁷⁷⁶
 Ye shall find it
 With Allah.
 Yea, better and
 Greater, in Reward,
 And seek ye the Grace
 Of Allah: for Allah is⁵⁷⁷⁷
 Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5774. This refers to *Jihād*. The better opinion is that this particular verse was revealed in Madinah, long after the greater part of the Sūra. The reference, further on, to canonical Prayers and regular Charity (*Zakāt*), points to the same conclusion.

5775. Cf. ii. 2456, and n. 276, where the meaning of "a Beautiful Loan" is explained. See also lvii. 18. The "Beautiful Loan" should be that of our own souls. We should expect no returns in kind, for that is not possible. But the reward we shall find with Allah will be infinitely greater and nobler. Cf. the biblical phrase, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi. 20).

5776. Any good that we do raises our own spiritual status and dignity. We must not think that when we speak of Allah's service or Allah's Cause, we are doing anything for His benefit: He is independent of all needs whatsoever.

5777. This emphasizes the need of Allah's Grace. Whatever good we do, our own merits are comparatively small. Allah's Grace must lift us up and blot out our shortcomings. Even in piety there may be an arrogance which may become a sin. We should always seek Allah's Mercy in all humility.