

**INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Fajr*, 89.**

This is one of the earliest of the Sūras to be revealed,—probably within the first ten in chronological order.

Its meaning is suggested by contrasts,—contrasts in nature and in man's long history. Thus does it enforce the lesson of Faith in the Hereafter to “those who understand”. Man's history and legendary lore show that greatness does not last and the proudest are brought low. For enforcing moral and spiritual truths, the strictest history is no better than legend. Indeed all artistic history is legend, for it is written from a special point of view.

Man is easily cowed by contrasts in his own fortunes, and yet he does not learn from them the lesson of forbearance and kindness to others, and the final elevation of goodness in the Hereafter. When all the things on which his mind and heart are set on this earth shall be crushed to nothingness, he will see the real glory and power, love and beauty, of Allah, for these are the light of the Garden of Paradise.

*Al-Fajr, or Dawn.*

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

1. By the Dawn;<sup>6108</sup>

2. By the ten Nights;<sup>6109</sup>

3. By the Even

And Odd (contrasted);<sup>6110</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْفَجْرِ

وَالْأَيَّامِ الْعَشْرِ

وَاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ

6108. Four striking contrasts are mentioned, to show Allah's Power and Justice, and appeal to "those who understand". The first is the glory and mystery of the Break of Day. It just succeeds the deepest dark of the Night, when the first rays of light break through. Few people except those actually in personal touch with nature can feel its compelling power. In respect both of beauty and terror, of hope and inspiration, of suddenness and continuing increase of light and joy, this "holy time" of night may well stand as the type of spiritual awakening from darkness to Faith, from Death to Resurrection.

6109. By the Ten Nights are usually understood the first ten nights of *Zul-Hijja*, the sacred season of Pilgrimage. From the most ancient times Makkah was the centre of Arab pilgrimage. The story of Abraham is intimately connected with it: see ii. 125-127 and notes, also n. 217 to ii. 197. In times of Paganism various superstitions were introduced, which Islam swept away. Islam also purified the rites and ceremonies, giving them new meaning. The ten days specially devoted to the Hajj introduce a striking contrast in the life of Makkah and of the pilgrims. Makkah, from being a quiet secluded city, is then thronged with thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world. They discard their ordinary dress—representing every kind of costume—to the simple and ordinary *Ihrām* (n. 217); they refrain from every kind of fighting and quarrel; they abstain from every kind of luxury and self-indulgence; they hold all life sacred, however humble, except in the way of carefully-regulated sacrifice; and they spend their nights in prayer and meditation.

6110. The contrast between even and odd forms the subject of learned argument among those who deal with the properties of numbers. In any case, even and odd follow each other in regular succession: each is independent, and yet neither is self-sufficient. In ultimate analysis every even number is a pair of odd ones. And all things go in pairs: see xxxvi. 36, and n. 3981. In the animal world pairs are but two individuals, and yet each is a complement of the other. Both abstract and concrete things are often understood in contrast with their opposites. Why should we not, in spiritual matters, understand this life better with reference to the Hereafter, and why should we disbelieve in the Hereafter simply because we cannot conceive of anything different from our present life?

4. And by the Night<sup>6111</sup>  
When it passeth away;-
5. Is there (not) in these<sup>6112</sup>  
An adjuration (or evidence)  
For those who understand?
6. Seest thou not  
How thy Lord dealt  
With the 'Ād (people),-<sup>6113</sup>
7. Of the (city of) Iram,<sup>6114</sup>  
With lofty pillars,

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حَمِيرٍ ﴿٢﴾

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ ﴿٣﴾

إِرَامَ بَابِ الْأَعْمَادِ ﴿٤﴾

6111. That is, the last part of the night, just before full day-light. Note the gradations: first, the turn of the night, when just the first rays of daylight break through; secondly, the social and institutional rites of religion, like those during the ten nights of Pilgrimage; thirdly, when the usual contrast between the Here and Hereafter vanishes, and we can see heaven even here; and lastly, when this world vanishes, the full light of Day arrives, and we see Reality face to face.

6112. All these Signs draw our attention, like solemn adjurations in speech, to the profoundest mystery of our inner life, viz., how from utter depths of darkness-ignorance or even degradation-Allah's wonderful Light or Revelation can lead us by contrast into the most beautiful sunshine of a glorious spiritual Day. But the contrast suggest also the opposite process as a corollary,-how resistance to Allah's light would destroy us utterly, converting our greatness or glory to perdition, as happened with the peoples of Arab antiquity, the 'Ād and the Thamūd, and the type of the powerful but arrogant and godless monarch, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Like a man with a bounded horizon, the average man does not understand these long-range mysteries of life, and we have need to pray that we may be of "those who understand".

6113. For the 'Ād see n. 1040 to vii. 65. They seem to have possessed an ancient civilisation, which succumbed when they persistently broke Allah's law.

6114. Iram would seem to have been an ancient 'Ād capital, in southern Arabia. It boasted of lofty architecture ("lofty pillars"). Some Commentators understand Iram to be the name of an eponymous hero of the 'Ād, in which case the following line, "with lofty pillars", should be construed "of lofty stature". The 'Ād were a tall race.

8. The like of which  
Were not produced  
In (all) the land?<sup>6115</sup>
9. And with the Thamūd<sup>6116</sup>  
(People), who cut out  
(Huge) rocks in the valley?—
10. And with Pharaoh  
Lord of Stakes?<sup>6117</sup>
11. (All) these transgressed  
Beyond bounds in the lands.
12. And heaped therein  
Mischief (on mischief).
13. Therefore did thy Lord  
Pour on them a source  
Of diverse chastisements:
14. For thy Lord is  
Watchful.<sup>6118</sup>

الَّتِي لَمْ يَخْلَقْ مِثْلَهَا فِي الْأَلْبَدِ ۝٨

وَتَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا الصَّخِرَ بِالْوَادِ ۝٩

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَارِ ۝١٠

الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي الْأَلْبَدِ ۝١١

فَاكْتَرُوا فِيهَا الْفَسَادَ ۝١٢

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ۝١٣

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبَآئِمٍ رَصَادٍ ۝١٤

6115. This tract of southern Arabia was once very prosperous (Arabia Felix) and contains ruins and inscriptions. It has always been an object of great interest to the Arabia. In the time of Mu'awiya some precious stones were found among the ruins in this locality. Quite recently, a bronze lion's head and a bronze piece of gutter with a Sabæan inscription, found in Najrân, have been described in the *British Museum Quarterly*, vol. XI, No. 4, Sept. 1937.

6116. For the Thamūd see n. 1043 to vi. 73. Their civilisation shows traces of Egyptian, Syrian, and (later) Greek and Roman influences. They built fine temples, tombs, and buildings cut out of the solid rock. The cult of the goddess Lât flourished among them.

6117. For "Lord of Stakes", see xxxviii. 12, n 4160. For Pharaoh's arrogance and his fall see xx. 43, 78-79. The three examples given, the 'Ad, the Thamūd, and Pharaoh, show that neither nations nor individuals, however mighty, prosperous, or firmly established they may be, can live if they transgress the Law of Allah. The Law of Allah, which is also the law of the higher nature which He has bestowed on us, made them in the first place great and glorious: when they fell from it and "heaped mischief on mischief", they were swept away.

6118. Even though Allah's punishment is delayed, it is not to be supposed that He does not see all things. Allah's providence is ever vigilant: His punishment of evil doers is a form of justice to the weak and the righteous whom they oppress. It is part of the signification of His title as *Rabb* (Cherisher).

15. Now, as for man,<sup>6119</sup>  
When his Lord trieth him,  
Giving him honour and gifts,  
Then saith he, (puffed up),  
"My Lord hath honoured me."

فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْنَلَهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ  
رَبِّيَ أَكْرَمَنِ ﴿١٥﴾

16. But when he trieth him,  
Restricting his subsistence<sup>6120</sup>  
For him, then saith he  
(In despair), "My Lord  
Hath humiliated me!"

وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْنَلَهُ فَقَدَّرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ  
رَبِّيَ أَهَنَنِ ﴿١٦﴾

17. Nay, nay! But ye<sup>6121</sup>  
Honour not the orphans!

كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تَكْرُمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. Nor do ye encourage  
One another<sup>6122</sup>  
To feed the poor!—

وَلَا تَحْضُوتُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْيَسْكِينِ ﴿١٨﴾

19. And ye devour Inheritance—<sup>6123</sup>  
All with greed,

وَتَأْكُلُونَ الثَّرَاثَ أَكْثَ لَا لَمَّا ﴿١٩﴾

6119. Contrast with Allah's justice and watchful care, man's selfishness and perversity. Allah tries us both by prosperity and adversity: in the one we should show humility and kindness; and in the other patience and faith. On the contrary, we get puffed up in prosperity and depressed in adversity, putting false values on this world's goods.

6120. *Subsistence*, in both the literal and the figurative sense. Allah provides for all, but people complain if the provision is measured and restricted to their needs, circumstances, and antecedents, and does not come up to their desires or expectations, or is different from that given to people in quite different circumstances.

6121. Even at our own valuation, if we are favoured with superfluities, do we think of the fatherless children, or the struggling poor? On the contrary, too many men are but ready to embezzle the helpless orphan's inheritance, and to waste their own substance in worthless riot instead of supplying the people's real needs.

6122. Kindness and generosity set up standards which even worldly men feel bound to follow out of social considerations even if they are not moved by higher motives. But the wicked find plausible excuses for their own hard-heartedness, and by their evil example choke up the springs of charity and kindness in others.

6123. Inheritance is abused in two ways. (1) Guardians and trustees for the inheritance of minors or women or persons unable to look after their own interests should fulfil their trusts with even more care than they devote to their own interests. Instead of that they selfishly "devour" the property. (2) Persons who inherit property in their own rights should remember that in that case, too, it is a sacred trust. They must use it for the purposes, objects, and duties which they also inherit. It gives them no licence to live in idleness or waste their days in riotous show.

20. And ye love wealth  
With inordinate love!
21. Nay! When the earth  
Is pounded to powder,<sup>6124</sup>
22. And thy Lord cometh,  
And His angels,  
Rank upon rank,
23. And Hell, that Day,<sup>6125</sup>  
Is brought (face to face),-  
On that Day will man  
Remember, but how will  
That remembrance profit him?
24. He will say: "Ah!  
Would that I had  
Sent forth (Good Deeds)  
For (this) my (Future) Life!"
25. For, that Day,  
His Chastisement will be  
Such as none (else)  
Can inflict,<sup>6126</sup>

وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾

كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ﴿٢١﴾

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا ﴿٢٢﴾

وَجِيءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَنْذِكُرُ الْإِنْسَانَ

وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾

يَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي ﴿٢٤﴾

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يَعْذِبُ عَذَابَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

6124. Our attention is now called to the Day of Reckoning. Whether we failed to respect the rights of the helpless here or actually suppressed those rights in our mad love for the good things of this life, we shall have to answer in the realm of Reality. This solid earth, which we imagine to be so real, will crumble to powder like dust before the real Presence, manifested in glory.

6125. The Retribution will at last come, and we shall realise it in our inmost being, all the illusions of this fleeting world having been swept away. Then we shall remember, and wish, too late, that we had repented. Why not repent now? Why not bring forth the fruits of repentance now, as a preparation for the Hereafter?

6126. "Chastisement" in this verse and the "binding in bonds" in the next verse are two distinct phases of the Penalty. "Chastisement" involves pain and agony, such as cannot be imagined anywhere else, or from any other source, for it touches our inmost soul and cannot be compared with anything our bodies may suffer or others may inflict. "Bonds" imply confinement, want of freedom, the closing of a door which was once open but which we deliberately passed by. We see that others accepted in faith and entered that door. This shutting out of what might have been in worse than any other bonds or confinement we can imagine, and may be worse than actual chastisement.

26. And His bonds  
Will be such as  
None (other) can bind.

وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٦٧﴾

27. (To the righteous soul  
Will be said:)  
"O (thou) soul,"<sup>6127</sup>  
In (complete) rest  
And satisfaction!

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٦٨﴾

28. "Come back thou  
To thy Lord,"<sup>6128</sup>  
Well pleased (thyself),  
And well-pleasing  
Unto Him!

ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٦٩﴾

29. "Enter thou, then,  
Among my Devotees!

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي ﴿٧٠﴾

30. "Yea, enter thou  
My Heaven!"<sup>6129</sup>

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ﴿٧١﴾

6127. The righteous enter into their inheritance and receive their welcome with a title that suggests freedom from all pain, sorrow, doubt, struggle, disappointment, passion, and even further desire: at rest, in peace; in a state of complete satisfaction.

In Muslim theology, this stage of the soul is the final stage of bliss. The unregenerate human soul, that seeks its satisfaction in the lower earthly desires, is the *Ammāra* (xii. 53). The self-reproaching soul that feels conscious of sin and resists it is the *Lawwāma* (lxxv. 2, and n. 5810).

6128. Note that Evil finds itself isolated, and cries out in lonely agony (verse 24), while Good receives a warm welcome from the Lord of Goodness Himself,—also that it is the soul which enters heaven, and not the gross body which perishes.

6129. The climax of the whole is: "Enter My Heaven!" Men may have imagined all kinds of heaven before, and many types are used in the sacred Word itself. But nothing can express the reality itself better than "My Heaven"—Allah's own Heaven! May we reach it through Allah's grace!