

Surah al-Muzzammil, Chapter 73

(The One Wrapped in Garment)

Section (juz') 29

Number of Verses: 20

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The blessed Chapter, revealed in Mecca, has twenty Verses. The tone of the Chapter clearly reflects its similarities to other Meccan Chapters. The majority of the blessed Verses of the Chapter in question indicate that when the Noble Prophet (S) had declared his Prophetic call, his opponents rose to confront and belie him. Thus, the Noble Prophet (S) was Divinely commanded to show tolerance to them.

The occasion of the Revelation of the blessed Chapter is reflected in some of the traditions according to which upon receiving the earliest of the Revelations, he was stood in awe. He came to Khadija, complained from physical discomfort and rested for a while.

He bade his wife to wrap him in a garment when Gabriel revealed the blessed Verse

"O you wrapped in garment!"

unto him. 1

The Merit of Reciting the Chapter

According to a Prophetic tradition:

*"Whoever recites Surah al-Muzzammil, he will not face hardships in this world and the Hereafter."*²

Other traditions have been narrated concerning the recitation of the blessed Chapter, though for the sake of brevity, mention is not herein made of them. It is worthy of note, however, that such merits and blessings are dependent upon acting upon religious obligations.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 1-5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَزْمِلُ

قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

- 1. O you wrapped in garment!**
- 2. Stand [in prayer] all night, except a little.**
- 3. Half of it or a little less than that,**
- 4. Or a little more. And recite the Qur'an slowly and meditatively.**
- 5. Since, We shall send down unto you a weighty Word.**

The tone of the opening Verses of the blessed Chapter reflects that the Noble Prophet (S) is Divinely called unto steadfastness and preparedness for an immense obligation acting upon which requires spiritual growth.

The blessed Verses say:

"O you wrapped in garment! Stand in prayer all night, except a little. Half of it or a little less than that or a little more and recite the Qur'an meditatively with utmost clarity and eloquence."

It would be of interest to note that the Noble Prophet is herein addressed as:

"O you wrapped in garment!"

rather than

"O Messenger!"

or

"O Prophet!"

reflecting that it would be befitting to rise up, grow spiritually, and prepare oneself for embarking upon such great mission, rather than leading the life of a recluse. He is urged to rise at night, since his foes are asleep at the time and people desist from following their daily routines, hence further preparedness for meditation and spiritual growth.

Likewise, he is urged to recite the Holy Qur'anic Verses, since they include all the required lessons in this respect. Recitation of the blessed Verses is the best means of strengthening one's faith, steadfastness, fear of God Almighty, and spiritual growth.

The Arabic word *tartil* denotes "regularity, articulation, and being well-ordered," though it herein implies articulate, eloquent, and meditative recitation of the Qur'anic Verses, reflecting upon their meanings and impacts on one's life.

It goes without saying that such recitation of the Qur'anic Verses may easily lead man toward spiritual growth, moral nobilities, and fear of God Almighty. Some Qur'an exegetes maintain that establishing canonical prayers is herein intended, since a major part of such prayers lies in reciting Qur'anic Verses.

The clause

"stand at night" (qum al-layl)

is contrasted with "sleeping," though it does not solely denote standing up.

The point is that the different expressions denoting the spans of time spent in nightly vigilance actually

implies "choice"; thus, the Noble Prophet (S) is free to choose to stay awake half of the night or sometime more or less, devoting his nightly vigilance to the recitation of the Qur'anic Verses.

Firstly, mention is made of all night, except for a little, then the time span is reduced to half of the night and then to less than half.

Some exegetes hold that choosing amongst two thirds, half, and a third of the night is herein intended, as the closing Verse

"Your Lord knows that you stand [to pray at night] a little less than two thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night"

reiterates the same statement.

It is worthy of note that the last Verse clearly reflects that the Noble Prophet (S) was not alone in

"standing at night",

but a group of the believers accompanied him in such spiritual growth and had recognized him as their model in this respect.

Some Qur'an exegetes maintain that

"Stand [in prayer] all night, except a little"

bids the Noble Prophet to stand in prayer all nights except for some of them. According to this view, there is no exception in terms of the nightly spans of time, rather some nights is hereby intended.

Nonetheless, such interpretation is not seemingly accurate taking into account the single nominal form

"night" (layl)

and the clause

"half or less than that."

Different exegetes suggest different interpretations for

"weighty Word"

as they address different aspects of the question. However, the weight of the Word seemingly implies that the Holy Qur'an, from different aspects, is herein intended. The Holy Qur'anic Verses are weighty in terms of contents, meaning, and their impacts on the believers' hearts.

The same theme is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

"Had We sent down this Qur'an on mountains, you would have seen them humbling themselves and rent asunder."

Such

"weight"

connotes the warnings, promises, obligations, hardships resulting from the propagation of the Prophetic call.

The

"weight"

alludes to the weight in the scales of deeds and their accounts on the Day of Resurrection and finally the burden of complete implementation of such plans.

Inasmuch as the recitation of the Holy Qur'anic Verses is convenient and delightful, though acting upon their contents is hard, particularly on the threshold of the Prophetic call, when his milieu was imbued with the dark clouds of ignorance, idolatry, and superstitions.

It was at that time that his obdurate and merciless foes were hand in hand against him and his companions, though they sought assistance from Qur'anic teachings, establishment of nightly prayers, and seeking closeness to the Pure Essence of the Lord and thereby succeeded in overcoming all hardships and carrying such heavy burden.

According to the exegetic work, Atyab al-Bayan, the

"weighty word"

implies the proclamation of the Noble Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's (as) caliphate and imamate, obliging him to confront so many obdurate foes.

Accordingly, the Holy Qur'an is not herein intended, since it is said

*"Recite the Qur'an so that you may receive the weighty word in future. Thus, the Holy Qur'an precedes the weighty word."*⁴

Some traditions have been narrated from the Infallible Imams (as) concerning of the word tartil, each of which addresses one of the aspects of the question.

It is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) that tartil herein reflects articulate recitation, unlike the hasty recitation of poetry and scattering the same like sand.

One is supposed to recites the Verses in a manner that he may strike the hardened hearts and awaken

them, without necessarily aiming at reaching the end of the Chapter [namely, it is significant to comprehend the meaning of the Verses].⁵

In this vein, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) as saying

*"The Holy Qur'an is not supposed to recite the Qur'anic Verses hastily, but they should be recited articulately. Whenever you come to a Verse treating of Hell, stop your recitation and invoke God Almighty for forgiveness. But, when you come to a Verse treating of Paradise, stop your recitation and invoke God Almighty to grant you Paradise [and prepare yourself for the same]."*⁶

It is also reported that the Noble Prophet recited the blessed Verses discretely and articulately with a sweet voice.⁷

Further Qur'anic Verses and traditions⁸ treat of the same significance reflecting that the blessed Qur'anic Verses are not supposed to be recited as if they are devoid of meaning, but in reciting them, particular attention is to be accorded to all the issues deepening their impacts on the reciters and the listeners.

It should be borne in mind at all times that Qur'anic Verses are Divine Messages and it is incumbent upon the believers to act upon their contents.

It is unfortunate that many a Muslim have consigned such truth to oblivion and have contented themselves with reciting the mere words and completing the Chapters and the Holy Qur'an in its entirety, without according the least attention to the goals behind their Revelation and the Divine Messages imparted by them.

It is true that Qur'anic Words deserve attention and reciting them entails Divine Blessings, but it should be borne in mind that reciting the words is a prelude to the comprehension of their contents.

It is noteworthy that the blessed Verses in question reflect that significance of nightly vigilance, establishing nightly prayers, and the recitation of the Qur'anic Verses when the neglectful are asleep.

As mentioned above, praying at night and particularly at dawn immensely impacts the purity of the soul leading to spiritual growth, purity and awakening of the heart, strengthening the faith and will power, and solidifying the pillars of the fear of God Almighty in human heart and soul, such that man clearly witnesses them upon his first trial.

Thus, praying at night is accorded particular attention in the Qur'anic Verses and the traditions narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams.

In this respect, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

*"Three things include Divine particular blessings: nightly prayers, feeding those who take fast at the time of breaking it, and visiting Muslim brethren."*⁹

According to another tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) concerning the blessed Qur'anic Verse

"Righteous deeds efface the impressions of evil deeds,"

he said:

*"Nightly prayers efface the sins committed in the day."*¹⁰

A detailed discussion treating of the same topic is to be found above, under 17:79, where ten traditions of interest were also quoted.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 6-7

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْئًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا

6. Your nightly prayers are certainly stronger and more steadfastly.

7. And you make prolonged and steadfast efforts by day.

The blessed Verses in question further treat of the nightly prayers and the spiritual growth engendered by the nightly recitation of the blessed Qur'anic Verses.

They actually further support the preceding blessed Verses by saying that such Divine Command as to the nightly prayers and the recitation of the Verses entails stronger and more steadfast prayers and spiritual growth.

The Arabic nominal form nashi'a denotes "occurrence," though three connotations are suggested for its contextual meaning herein: the night hours occurring consecutively or particularly the late hours of the night and the break of the day; the nightly standing in prayers and the recitation of the Qur'anic Verses, in which respect it is narrated from the Imam Baqir (as) and the Imam Sadiq (as) that standing late at night to perform nightly prayers is herein intended,¹¹ and according to another tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) concerning the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question, rising from the bed with no intention but to pray to God Almighty is herein intended;¹² the word implies a spiritual state of sublime exaltation engendered in the heart at such hours at night whose impressions on human soul is of further profundity and lasting.

It is worthy of note, however, that the last two connotations are correlative and the twain are implied

herein.

The Arabic adverbial form wata'an implies setting foot and also agreement. The Arabic adverbial clause ashaddu wata'an connotes the hardship and the trouble in standing at night for nightly vigilance and prayers.

It may also imply the strong and lasting impressions made in human soul in the light of such prayers. At any rate, the latter sounds further befitting. It may also suggest further harmony experienced on such occasions amongst human heart, vision, and hearing actualized at the time of prayers.

The Arabic comparative adjectival form aqwama, cognate with qiyam ("rising") denotes "firmer; more straight." The Arabic passive present verbal form qila herein implies remembrance of God Almighty and recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question is amongst those Verses that express most eloquently the merits of praying at night and at daybreak when the mind is not so preoccupied with worldly affairs and it may thereby purify and foster human soul. It is herein reflected that human soul is particularly prepared to worship God Almighty and be engaged in reflection and remembering Him.

The blessed Verse 7 reflects that it is owing to the fact that you persevere in your abundant efforts during the day, since you are occupied at all times with guiding people, imparting your Divine Message, and finding solutions to the lives of the individuals and the society; therefore, you do not find adequate opportunities to devote yourself to worshipping God Almighty and you may spend the night in prayer.

Another suggested exegesis, which is of more interest and stands in further harmony with the preceding and the following blessed Verses, is that since you have to carry the heavy burdens of your obligations, you may strengthen your soul by your nightly prayers and obtain the required preparedness for embarking upon such great endeavors.

The Arabic nominal form sabh denotes movement and it is also applied to swimming, since the latter entails frequent movements. The human society is seemingly likened to a boundless ocean in which many people are drowning.

The waves move toward different directions in the agitated ocean and wondering barks seek a safe haven. The Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) is the only rescue guard and the Holy Qur'an is the only rescue boat in the ocean. Such great swimmer is supposed to prepare himself for such enormous mission that lies in imparting the Divine Call during the day.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 8-10

وَأَذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا

8. And remember the Name of your Lord and solely attach your heart to Him,

9. The Lord of the east and the west. There is not god but He. Therefore, take Him Alone as your Guardian and the Disposer of your affairs.

10. And be patient with what they say and keep away from them befittingly.

Following the Divine Command as to rise at night in prayer and brief reference made to the profound impressions of prayers, mention is made of five complementary Commands, saying:

"Remember the Name of your Lord."

It goes without saying that the mere remembrance of His Name is not herein intended, rather reference is made to according attention to the point that verbal remembrance serves as a prelude to the remembrance of the heart purifying the soul and fostering the tree of intuitive knowledge and fear of God Almighty in the heart.

The Arabic nominal form rabb herein indicates that whenever one utters His Sacred Name, one is supposed to pay heed to the boundless Bounties and ongoing fostering of human soul.

Different stages of remembering God Almighty are mentioned by one of the exegetes: the first state is remembering His Name, as reflected in the blessed Verse in question; the second stage is to remember His Pure Essence in one's heart, as reflected in 7:203:

"And remember your Lord within yourself, humbly and with fear; the third stage transcends that of Divine Lordship to the Divine Attributes of His Beauty and Glory signified by Allah,"

as indicated in 33:41:

"O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance."

Thus, such ongoing remembrance undergoes different stages of development and the one who remembers Him is transported to the zenith of perfection. 13

The second Command is saying:

"Attach your heart unto God Almighty, sever all the aspirations from anything besides Him, and sincerely rise to pray to Him."

The Arabic imperative verbal form tabattal denotes

"sever the ties!"

Mary (as) is called Baul since she did not marry. Fatima (as) is also called Batul since she was different from and superior to other women at the time in terms of deeds, conduct, and knowledge such that she had reached the stage of severance from all things besides Allah.

The verbal for herein implies the state in which man whole heartedly turns toward God Almighty, severing his ties from whatever exists besides Allah. Thus, such man is absorbed in devotion to God Almighty and performs all his deeds solely for Him Alone.

In this respect, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) that the verbal form herein implies the state of humbleness at the time of praying to God Almighty.¹⁴

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) as saying:

"There is neither asceticism nor separation in Islam."

The tradition implies that turning away from the world as practiced by the Christian monks does not exist in the Islamic faith, since they do not marry and abandon all social activities, but a true Muslim devotes himself wholeheartedly to God Almighty while living at the heart of the society. It is narrated from the Infallible Imams (as) that the verbal form in question implies stretching one's hands while establishing canonical prayers.

However, it is crystal clear that it reflects one of the manifestations of devotion and severing one's ties from all besides God Almighty.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that such remembrance of God Almighty and devotion to Him are the great sources used by the men of God in fulfilling their enormous obligations aiming at guiding the people.

The blessed Verse 9 treats of the third Command:

"The Lord of the east and the west besides Whom there is no other God. Take Him Alone as your Guardian and the Disposer of your affairs."

It is worthy of note that following the stages of remembering God Almighty and devotion, the third stage is to put one's trust totally in God Almighty, the Lord of the east and the west. In other words, the world of existence in its entirety is subservient to His Sovereignty and Lordship. He is the only God to be worshipped.

The blessed Verse supports putting one's trust totally in God Almighty, since in the wide expanse of the world of existence, man may solely rely on Him as the Disposer of all the affairs, since He is the only Sovereign, Fosterer, and Bountiful Lord Worthy of being worshipped.

Mention is made of the fourth and the fifth Commands in the blessed Verse 10:

"Be patient with what they say and keep away from them befittingly."

Thus, reference is made of the states of patience and separation, since the path of calling people unto the Truth abounds in the foes' slander and harassment. The gardener is supposed to bear the stings of the thorns in order to pick up flowers.

Thus, one is supposed to be indifferent to the foes and keep away from them at times in order to ward off their evil actions and give them lessons. It is worthy of note, however, that such separation does not entail leaving incomplete education, propagation, and calling people unto God Almighty.

The blessed Verses in question provide the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) and all those people following in his footsteps a series of comprehensive and perfect rules, urging them to derive their inspiration from praying to God Almighty at night and at day break and foster the tree by remembering God Almighty at all times, devotion, total reliance on Him, patience, and at times keeping away from the foes. What an interesting and comprehensive set of rules!

The expression

"the Lord of the east and the west"

makes a reference to His Sovereignty and Lordship over all the world of existence. The same expression is used in common parlance when we say so and so rules over the east and the west, namely he rules over the whole globe rather than the points of the east and the west.

"Befitting separation" (hijr jamil),

as mentioned above, connotes keeping away out of empathy and calling people unto the Truth.

It is an educational method employed at certain times which stands in no disharmony against the question of jihad at other times, since each of them have their own proper places. In other words, such separation does not entail indifference, as it is a kind of paying attention. Some have mistakenly regarded the blessed Verse in question as abrogating those of jihad.

The late eminent scholar, Tabarsi, in his Majma' al-Bayan (under the blessed Verse in question) states that the blessed Verse reflects that the propagators of the Islamic faith and the callers to the Holy Qur'an are supposed to be patient in the face of hardships and associate with people with toleration and a good disposition, such that the hearts of the audiences sooner welcome their words.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 11-14

وَذَرْنِي وَالْمُكَذِّبِينَ أُولِي النَّعْمَةِ وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيلًا

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنْكَالًا وَجَحِيمًا

وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيبًا مَّهِيلًا

11. And leave Me Alone to deal with the beliers, those who are in possession of good things of life. And grant them respite for a little while.

12. With Us are fetters and the [Hell] Fire.

13. And a food that chokes and an excruciating torment.

14. On the Day when the earth and the mountains will be in violent shake and the mountains will be a heap of sand.

The blessed Verse 11 is addressed to the Noble Prophet (S) urging him to leave the records of the deeds of such arrogant sinners with Him. The preceding blessed Verse made a brief reference to the harassments of the enemies of the Islamic faith.

The blessed Verses in question harshly attacks them by severe warnings against the torments awaiting them in this world and the Hereafter. Thus, they are urged to revise their evil deeds.

The early Muslims contemporaneous with the Noble Prophet (S) are also consoled against the harsh attacks by the enemies urging them to persevere and remain steadfast by saying:

"Leave the affluent beliers unto Me and grant them respite for a short while."

In other words, God Almighty is saying that the Noble Prophet is not supposed to confront them, but to leave them to Him, such that they avail themselves of a brief respite so that they may heed the ultimatum and reveal their nature and carry the burdens of further sins. Divine excruciating torments await them.

It is recorded in the history of Islam that the Muslims gained power before long and inflicted severe blows upon their enemies at the battles of Badr, Hunayn, and Ahzab. The arrogant enemies died before

long and met their dire fate of Divine torments in the purgatory and those of the Hereafter are not too remote from them.

The Arabic phrase

ul-i 'l-ni'ma ("possessors of bounties")

herein implies the arrogance and neglect stemming from affluence leading the affluent oftentimes to entanglements. The history of the Prophets (as) and the Qur'anic Verses reflect that the affluent are the foremost enemies of the faith, though they are supposed to precede others in welcoming the call of the Truth as a token of their gratitude for the Divine Bounties granted them.

The blessed Verse 12 proceeds with further explicit warnings saying:

"With Us are fetters and the [Hell] Fire."

The Arabic plural nominal form *ankal* denotes heavy chains. The word lexically denotes feebleness and weakness, since the shackles and fetters binding the feet, the hands, and the neck impede movement and entail weakness, the word is employed in the sense of chains, fetters, and shackles. The point is that such affluent but disobedient people availed themselves of unrestrained indulgence in worldly pleasures, but bondage and Hellfire awaits them in the Hereafter.

The blessed Verse 13 adds that such disobedient people shall be given

"a food that chokes and an excruciating torment."

They had palatable food in this world and indulged in the pleasures of the flesh, whereas a food that will choke and painful torments will be in store for them in the world to come. The severity of such torments is known to no one but God Almighty. In this respect, it is narrated that a Muslim was reciting the blessed Verse in question once while the Noble Prophet (S) listened to him.

The reciter of the Verse cried out of a sudden and lost consciousness.¹⁶ It is also reported that the Noble Prophet (S) was reciting the blessed Verse and had the same experience.¹⁷ Such people will choke on the food in Hell.

The same theme is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an¹⁸:

"No food will there be for them but a poisonous thorny plant."

It is also mentioned in the blessed Verses 43 and 44 that the sinners shall feed on the tree of Zaqqum, the same bitter and poisonous plant of a foul smell.

The blessed Verse 14 concerns the day when such torments shall be inflicted on the sinners, saying:

"On the Day when the earth and the mountains will be in violent shake and the mountains will be a heap of sand."

The Arabic nominal form *kathib* denotes "dune, sand hill." The Arabic nominal form *mahil* implies pouring something soft like sand and flour on something else, though it herein connotes something which is never fixed and permanent.

The blessed Verse reflects that the mountains shall disintegrate on the Day of Resurrection such that they turn into soft sand in which feet sink. Concerning the mountains on the threshold of the Resurrection, there are different Qur'anic expressions all of which reflect that they disintegrate and change into soft soil and sand. Further details may be found above under 20: 105.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 15–16

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا

فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُولَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيًّا

15. We have sent unto you a Messenger to be a witness over you as We did send a Messenger to Pharaoh.

16. But Pharaoh disobeyed the Messenger and We chastised him severely.

The Noble Prophet (S) witnesses the deeds in this world and bears witness to the same on the Day of Resurrection.

The blessed Verse 15 compares the Noble Prophet's (S) call and the animosity of the Arab chiefs against him and the rise of the Prophet Moses (as) against the people of the Pharaoh, saying:

"We have sent unto you a Messenger (S) to be a witness over you [whose obligation is to guide you and watch over your deeds] as We did send a Messenger (as) to Pharaoh [to guide him and his people and watch over their deeds]."

Thus, the Qur'anic Verses and the traditions reflect that the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (as) witness all our deeds. Fulfillment of the call entails supervision and the Noble Prophet (S) supervises all the deeds of his community and bears witness to the same.

The blessed Verse 16 is saying that Pharaoh rose against the Messenger of Allah (as) and God Almighty inflicted severe torments on him. Neither his enormous army, nor his vast realm, nor his power,

nor the possessions of his people could impede Divine torments and they were all drowned in the raging waves of the Nile in which they took pride. Now, you are far inferior to them in terms of means and number. How could you be deceived by your meager means and number?

The Arabic nominal form wabil originally denotes heavy shower, but it connotes any heavy and severe thing, particularly torments. The blessed Verse in question implies the severity of the torment that it showers upon the sinners like a heavy downpour of rain. Disobedience to the commands of Allah's Messenger entails torments and entanglements.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verses 17-19

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِن كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا

السَّمَاءُ مُنْفَطِرٌ بِهِ ۗ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكَرَةٌ ۗ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا

17. Then, how can you avoid the chastisement, if you disbelieve a Day that will make the children grey-headed?

18. On such Day the heaven will be cleft asunder and His Promise shall certainly be accomplished.

19. This is a warning and whoever wills, he may take a Path toward his Lord.

The Arabic plural nominal form wildan, whose singular form is walid, is applied to newly born infants. The Arabic plural nominal form shiyb, whose singular form is ashyab, denotes the grey-headed and the old. Two meanings may be suggested for the blessed Verse 17:

1. The severity of the Day of Resurrection shall be such that the newly born infants grow old.
2. That Day shall be so long that the children grow old.

At any rate, the blessed Verse is addressed to the disbelievers contemporaneous with the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S), warning them that if you disbelieve, how will you be untouched by the Divine severe torments that make the children grow old?

The torments which shall be inflicted upon the sinners on that Day shall be so severe, harsh, and horrible that "they shall make the children grow old."

It is reported that some of the horrible afflictions in this world may instantly make people grey-headed. The blessed Verse is saying that even if you happen not to be entangled with the torments in this world, like Pharaoh and his people, what will you do with the torments which shall be inflicted upon the disobedient on the Day of Resurrection?

The blessed Verse 18 further depicts that horrible Day, saying:

"On such Day the heaven will be cleft asunder and His Promise shall certainly be accomplished."

Many a Qur'anic Verses treat of the incidents that shall happen on the last day in this world and the Hereafter including horrible explosions and severe earthquakes and spontaneous alterations.

The blessed Verse in question briefly deals with the same saying that the heaven and the celestial bodies with their enormous greatness shall not stand the colossal incidents to occur on that Day; how the weak and vulnerable man shall be able to impede such incidents? The Arabic nominal form *infitar* denotes cleaving asunder.

The blessed Verse 19 makes a reference to the foregoing warnings, saying:

"This is a warning and whoever wills, he may take a Path toward his Lord."

Whoever intends to find guidance and attain to everlasting happiness may opt for the path leading to his Lord. Treading such path nonchalantly is not regarded as a merit, since the merit lies in that man chooses the path willfully. At any rate, God Almighty has provided man with the path, vision, and the shining sun so that man be able to choose the straight path and obey Divine Commands willfully.

Different exegeses have been suggested by Qur'an exegetes concerning the clause

"This is a warning."

Some suggest that reference is made to the admonitions in the preceding blessed Verses. Some maintain that mention is made of the Chapter or the Holy Qur'an in their entirety.

Some also hold that reference may be made to the Divine Command as to establishing nightly canonical prayers, as reflected in the opening Verses of the blessed Chapter, addressed to the Noble Prophet, though the clause in question is generalizing it to the entire Muslim community. Thus, the word path (*sabil*) mentioned in the following clause as well implies nightly canonical prayers as a significant path leading to the Lord.

Finally, the blessed Verses in question warn the arrogant beliers intoxicated by affluence and bounties against four excruciating torments: shackles and fetters, burning Fire, rough, choking, and deadly food,

and different kinds of torments contrasted with the bounties in this world, availing oneself of boundless freedom, comfortable life, palatable food, and comfort in different forms. Since they availed themselves of all these bounties at the price of wrong doing, arrogance, neglect, and disobedience to God Almighty, they shall have such dire fate on the Day of Resurrection.

Surah al-Muzzammil – Verse 20

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
 مَعَكَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۗ عَلِمَ أَنْ لَنْ تُحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا
 تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۗ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ مَرْضَىٰ ۗ وَأَخْرُونَ ۗ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَأَخْرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا
 تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ۗ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ۗ وَمَا
 تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا ۗ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا
 لِلَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

20. Your Lord knows that you and also a group of those with you stand [in prayer] at night a little less than two thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you are unable to [precisely] measure it, so He granted you Mercy. Therefore, recite the Qur'an as much as may be convenient to you.

He knows that there will be some amongst you who fall sick, others travel [for earning a living], yet others fight in Allah's Cause. Therefore, recite as much of the Qur'an as may be convenient to you, and perform canonical prayers and give alms, and lend Allah a goodly loan [expend in His Cause]. And [know that] whatever good deeds you send before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah, better and greater in Reward. And seek Forgiveness of Allah as Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Gracious.

The blessed Verse in question warns Muslims against being arrogant by doing good deeds like establishing nightly prayers, recitation of the Qur'anic Verses, and helping the poor, since they still need to invoke God Almighty to forgive their sins.

The blessed Verse herein reflects that shedding tears at night in prayer, doing jihad in the day, helping the poor, recitation of the Qur'anic Verses, going on business trips, and doing good righteous deeds are to be accompanied by seeking Divine Forgiving of one's sins. The preceding Verses urged Muslims to stand in prayer third, half, or two thirds of the night.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that calculating such measurements is hard lying beyond your

abilities; as a consequence of which God Almighty forgives you, but you may stand in prayer, establish canonical prayers, and recite the Qur'anic Verses as much as they are convenient to you, particularly when you are sick or you are on some journey.

It is narrated from the Noble Imam Ridha (as) as saying:

*"Recite the Qur'an to the extent of your humbleness and purity heart."*¹⁹

Traveling for commerce and that aiming at jihad are juxtaposed in the blessed Verse, though the former is this worldly and the latter is otherworldly. It is narrated that if a merchant remembers God Almighty at all times and refrains from fraud, hoarding, selling less than the due measure, and selling at an unlawful higher price, is like a warrior setting foot in the battle field to kill the enemy and safeguard security.²⁰

Recitation of the Qur'anic Verses is not a religious obligation, but it is highly recommended herein such that the Divine Command as to the same is reiterated twice and is thus accorded particular attention. It is worthy of note that Divine Commands are harmonious with human capacities and they never entail hardships.

It is in this vein that the sick are supposed to perform ritual ablution with soil or sand (tayammum) in lieu of water and they may establish their canonical prayers in the manner convenient to them. The sick are not supposed to take fast, but they should help the poor by paying a certain amount of money or give them a specified amount of goods as a token of atonement (kaffara).

The blessed Verse is saying that God Almighty is All-Aware that you may not make precise calculations; as a consequence of which He forgives your mistakes. The point is that Divine Obligations are convenient to man and they never entail hardships.

The Arabic clause *taba 'alaykum* (literally: "He has turned unto you"), according to the majority of Qur'an exegetes, suggests lightening the obligation rather than repenting of one's sins. It may also be suggested that upon the removal of the obligation, no sin may be committed and it equal Divine Forgiving.

Mention is made of four other Commands at the close of the blessed Verse thereby completing the plan as to self purification, saying:

"Establish canonical prayers; pay alms, lend Allah a goodly loan through expending in His Cause and know that whatever good deeds you send forth for yourselves shall be Rewarded by Allah most befittingly; invoke God Almighty for Forgiveness as He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Gracious."

These four Obligations, namely establishing canonical prayers, paying alms and expending in Allah's Cause, invoking God Almighty for Forgiveness, and Recitation of the Qur'anic Verses and reflecting upon them, as mentioned above, constitute a perfect plan aiming at self purification and spiritual growth bearing indubitable impressions on believers at any time, particularly on the threshold of the Islamic

faith.

Establishing prayers herein implies the obligatory canonical prayers performed five times a day. By alms, paying the obligatory canonical alms is herein intended. Further, lending God Almighty a goodly loan (qardh al-hasana) connotes the supererogatory expending in Allah's Cause.

The expression

"lending Allah a goodly loan"

is the most noble expression imaginable in this respect, since God Almighty is the Owner of all the Possessions and He is not expected by no means to request others to lend Him a loan, but He hereby urges the believers to expend and make sacrifices in His Cause and obtain merits by doing such noble deeds and tread the path of spiritual growth and attain perfection.

It is noteworthy that making mention of invoking God Almighty for Forgiveness, as mention at the close of such Divine Commands may reflect that by acting upon such Commands, man may not feel that he is perfect and God Almighty owes them something, but he is supposed to regard himself neglectful at all times and turn toward Him, since no one is able to praise Him most befittingly.

Some Qur'an exegetes maintain that laying emphasis on these Command reflects that the believers may not imagine that lightening the Obligations as to praying to God Almighty and reciting the Qur'anic Verses at night does not apply to other religious obligations, since the latter stand the way they are, namely other religious obligations are not subject to any decrease or lightening.²¹

O Lord! Grant us all the Blessing of standing in prayers at night, the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, and treading the path of spiritual growth in the light of the Heavenly Light!

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1. Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol. 28, p. 101; Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 6, p. 276.
 2. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 375.
 3. 59:21
 4. Tafsir Atyab al-Bayan, vol. 13, p. 249.
 5. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question; Usul Kafi, the chapter on the articulate recitation of the Qur'an (bab tartil al-Qur'an).
 6. Majma' al-Bayan, ibid.; Usul Kafi, ibid.; Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question.
 7. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.
 8. For instance, Usul Kafi; Nur al-Thiqalayn; Durr al-Manthur; and other tradition and exegetic sources.
 9. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 87, p. 143.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 378.
 12. Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 448, tradition 16.
 13. Fakhr Razi's exegetic work, vol. 30, p. 177.
 14. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question.

15. Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 450, tradition 27, narrating from the Noble Imam Baqir (as).
16. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.
17. Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol. 29, p. 107.
18. 88:6
19. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.
20. Tafsir Durr al-Manthur.
21. Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 20, p. 156.

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