

Sura 73: Al-Muzzammil (The Enwrapped One)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 20:

1. *You wrapped up in your garments.*
2. *Keep vigil the night long praying, except a little,*
3. *Half of it, or a little less.*
4. *Or a little more; and recite the Quran in slow, measured rhythmic tones.*
5. *We shall send down to you a heavy Message.*
6. *Indeed, the vigil of the night is (a time) when impression is more keen and speech more certain.*
7. *Surely you have during the day a long occupation.*
8. *So remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself with a complete devotion.*
9. *(He is) Lord of the east and the west; there is no god but He. Take Him therefore as your Guardian.*
10. *And persevere in enduring what they say, and ignore them graciously.*
11. *And leave Me (alone to deal with) the deniers, lords of ease and comfort (in this life); and give them a brief respite.*
12. *With Us are shackles, and a burning fire,*
13. *And a food that chokes, and a painful torment;*
14. *On the day when the earth and the mountains will shake, and the mountains become heaps of sand.*
15. *We have sent to you a messenger as a witness against you, as We sent to Pharaoh a messenger.*
16. *Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a ruinous seizure.*
17. *Then how shall you, if you disbelieve, guard yourselves against a Day that will make the children gray-haired?*
18. *The heaven shall be rent asunder thereby; His promise is ever brought to fulfillment.*
19. *Indeed, this is a reminder. Let him who wills, then, choose a way to his Lord.*
20. *Your Lord knows that you keep vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night, or (sometimes) half or a third thereof, as do a party of those with you. God determines the extent of the night and the day. He knows that you do not count, and turns to you in mercy. Recite, then, of the Quran that which is easy for you. He knows that there are sick people among you, while others travel in the land in search of God's bounty, and others are fighting for the cause of God. So recite of it that which is easy (for you), and establish prayers and pay the poor-dues, and lend God a goodly loan. Whatsoever good you send before you for your souls, you will find it with God, better and greater in the recompense. And seek forgiveness of God. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy. (73: 1 – 20)*

It has been narrated that the Chiefs of Quraish had a meeting to plot against the Prophet (PBUH). When the Prophet (PBUH) heard about this meeting he was stressed out and he wrapped himself in his clothes and went to bed. The first part of the Sura was then revealed to him. Verse twenty

was revealed a year later. This verse came to lessen the burden of performing night prayer for the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers who used to pray all night until their feet would become swollen. Another narration indicated that this Sura was revealed on the second encounter between Gabriel (PBUH) and the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) was terrified of the meeting so he went home hurriedly and asked his wife to wrap his garment around him. Either way, the Sura came to tell the Prophet (PBUH) that the time of comfort has ended and that there is hard work ahead of him, *“You wrapped up in your garments. Keep vigil the night long praying, except a little,”* This was a divine command, commanding the Prophet (PBUH) to stand up and keep vigil during the night praying. Praying by night was part of the training program that aimed at preparing the Prophet (PBUH) for the heavy task that was entrusted to him. Keeping vigil during the night praying to God and reciting Quran, *“Half of it, or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Quran in slow, measured rhythmic tones,”* was meant to prepare the Prophet (PBUH) for his task.

Authentic narrations indicated that the Prophet (PBUH) never prayed more than eleven raka’a during his night vigil. However, the eleven raka’a would consume two thirds of the night. It has been narrated that Sa’id ibn Hesham (RA) asked ‘Aisha (RA) about the character of the Prophet (PBUH) she said, *“His character was as the Quran prescribed.”* He asked her, *“Tell me about how he performed his night vigil?”* She said, *“Did you not read Surat Al-Muzzammil?”* He said, *“Yes.”* She said, *“The first few verses of this Sura revealed God’s command of the prescribed night prayers for the believers. The Prophet (PBUH) prayed all night for a period of twelve months until the last verse of the Sura was revealed. The verse changed the status of the night vigil in prayer from a compulsory prayer to a voluntary one.”* Ibn Hesham (RA) then asked about how the Prophet (PBUH) performed the night prayers. She said that the Prophet (PBUH) used to wake up during the night. He would pray eight raka’a continuously, then he sits, remembers God, and make invocations; then he stands up and continue with the ninth raka’a. Then he would pray two raka’a after that. These are eleven raka’a. When he became older, he would pray seven and two. Once the Prophet (PBUH) started to pray a voluntary prayer, it would become his habit to do it regularly afterwards.

Praying during the night while people are asleep; opening one’s heart to connect with God and receive His light. Enjoying the company of God all alone were parts of the training program that the Prophet (PBUH) received to prepare him for the hard task ahead of him, *“We shall send down to you a heavy Message. Indeed, the vigil of the night is (a time) when impression is more keen and speech more certain.”* During the night people are asleep, the atmosphere is quite, and there are no distractions. This is an appropriate environment for the enjoyment of night prayer. During the day people engage in different activities that preoccupy them, *“Surely you have during the day a long occupation.”* Nevertheless, one should always remember God, *“So remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself with a complete devotion.”* Remembrance of God should not be a mere lip service. Remembrance of God is a joint task for the heart and the tongue. Prayer and reciting Quran are two types of the activities of the remembrance of God. These acts require complete devotion.

One should devote his worship to the Lord of everything, *“(He is) Lord of the east and the west; there is no god but He. Take Him therefore as your Guardian.”* He is the Guardian in whom one should put his trust.

The Prophet (PBUH) was then commanded to persevere, *“And persevere in enduring what they say, and ignore them graciously.”* This verse must have been revealed after the call to Islam was made public, when the chiefs of Quraish started persecuting the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers. The command to be patient came next to the command to pray and remember God. These two actions are always connected together in preparing people for the heavy tasks of the call to Islam. Patience is a very important trait for God’s Messengers as well as for the believers in general. The Prophet (PBUH) was simply commanded to ignore the abusers graciously. He should not be angered by the abuse, nor should he attempt to retaliate or blame the abusers. This would certainly require a great deal of perseverance and prayers.

“And leave Me (alone to deal with) the deniers, lords of ease and comfort (in this life); and give them a brief respite.” God is capable of dealing with the deniers, especially those who are wealthy and arrogant. God is giving them a short respite, after this short respite they will get the appropriate recompense, *“With Us are shackles, and a burning fire, and a food that chokes, and a painful torment.”* This will happen on a horrific day, *“On the day when the earth and the mountains will shake, and the mountains become heaps of sand.”*

A reminder of what happened to Pharaoh was then given, *“We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness against you, as We sent to Pharaoh a Messenger. Pharaoh disobeyed the Messenger; so We seized him with a ruinous seizure.”* A rhetorical question was then posed to the deniers, if this is what happened before, how are you going to protect yourselves? How will you protect yourselves *“against a Day that will make the children gray-haired? The heaven shall be rent asunder thereby; His promise is ever brought to fulfillment?”* A horrible image is painted for the Day of Judgment; and God’s promise will be fulfilled.

Seeing this horrible picture, a way for salvation is then described, *“Indeed, this is a reminder. Let him who wills, then, choose a way to his Lord.”*

The following single verse brings ease and comfort to the hearts of the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers. After toiling for a full year, standing up in prayer the whole night they received the command that made life easier for them; praying by night was no longer mandatory, it was made voluntary, *“Your Lord knows that you keep vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night, or (sometimes) half or a third thereof, as do a party of those with you. God determines the extent of the night and the day. He knows that you do not count, and turns to you in mercy. Recite, then, of the Quran that which is easy for you. He knows that there are sick people among you, while others travel in the land in search of God's bounty, and others are fighting for the cause of God. So recite of it that which is easy (for you), and establish prayers and pay the poor-dues, and lend God a goodly loan. Whatsoever good you send before you for your souls, you will find it with God, better and greater in the recompense. And seek forgiveness of God. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.”*

