

Al-Fajr [The Dawn] **Makkan Period**

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[1] By the dawn,

[2] and the ten nights,

[3] and the even and the odd,

[4] and by the night when it departs.

[5] Is there in this an oath for one endowed with understanding?¹

[6] Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with ‘Ad

[7] of Iram, known for their lofty columns,

[8] the like of whom no nation was ever created in the lands of the world?

[9] And how did He deal with Thamud who hewed out rocks in the valley?

[10] And with Pharaoh of the tent pegs

[11] who transgressed in the countries of the world

1. Reflection on the verses that follow (see vv. 6 ff.) makes it clear that the Prophet (peace be on him) and the unbelievers were contending over the question of reward and punishment in the Next Life. The Prophet (peace be on him) sought to establish that the Hereafter was bound to take place whereas the unbelievers denied it. In this context we encounter an oath referring to four things: (i) the dawn, (ii) the ten nights, (iii) the even and the odd, and (iv) the night when it departs. The implication being that the testimony contained in this oath dispensed with the need for any other evidence to establish that the Next Life was bound to occur.

[12] spreading in them much corruption?

[13] Then their Lord unloosed upon them the lash of chastisement.

[14] Truly your Lord is ever watchful.²

[15] As for man, when his Lord tests him by exalting him and bestowing His bounties upon him, he says: "My Lord has exalted me."

[16] But when He tests him by straitening his sustenance, he says: "My Lord has humiliated me."³

[17] But no; you do not treat the orphan honourably,

[18] and do not urge one another to feed the poor,

[19] and greedily devour the entire inheritance,

[20] and love the riches, loving them ardently.

[21] But no; ⁴ when the earth is ground to powder,

[22] and when your Lord appears with rows upon rows of angels,

2. The verse depicts God as One Who lays an ambush. Whoever lays an ambush remains in hiding, waiting to surprise the enemy with a sudden attack. Unaware of the ambush, the victim is likely to come but when he exceeds a certain point, he falls prey to the ambush. This analogy applies to the wrong-doers of the world who are spreading all kinds of mischief and corruption, unaware that God is watching their misdeeds. Thanks to their heedlessness, they commit ever more misdeeds with impunity. Thus they reach a limit which God does not let them exceed. At this point they are suddenly seized by His scourge.

3. This, then, is man's materialistic concept of life. Man equates wealth, position and power in the world with the bestowal of honour; and when he is deprived of these, he thinks that God has humiliated him. The fact which he fails to grasp is that whatever God gives anyone in this world is by way of a test. One is tested both when one has wealth and power as well as when one is in a state of poverty and destitution.

4. It is stressed here that it is quite erroneous for man to fancy that he can act as he wishes and not be called to account thereafter.

[23] and When Hell is brought near that Day. On that Day will man understand, but of what avail will that understanding be?

[24] He will Say; "Would that I had sent ahead what would be of avail for this life of mine!"

[25] Then on that Day Allah will chastise as none other can chastise;

[26] and Allah Will bind as none other can bind.

[27] (On the other hand it will be said): O serene soul! ⁵

[28] Return to your Lord well-pleased (with your blissful destination), well-pleasing (to your Lord).

[29] So enter among My (righteous) servants

[30] and enter My Paradise."

5. The expression "serene soul" signifies the person who accepts, with full conviction, the One True God as his Lord and Sustainer, and recognizes the religious faith expounded by the Prophets as the True Faith.