

## Sūrah 73: al-Muzzammil

### Period of Revelation

The two sections of this Sūrah were revealed in two separate periods. The first section (v. 1-19) is unanimously a Makki Revelation, and this is supported both by its subject matter and by the hadith. As for the question, in which specific period of the life at Makkah it was revealed, it is not answered by the tradition, but the internal evidence of the subject matter of this section helps to determine the period of its revelation.

First, in it the Prophet has been instructed to the effect: “Arise during the night and worship God so that you may develop the capability to shoulder the heavy burden of Prophethood and to discharge its responsibilities.” This shows that this Command must have been given in the earliest period of the Prophethood when training was being imparted to the Prophet by God for this office.

Secondly, a Command has been given in it that the Qur’ān be recited in the Tahajjud Prayer for half the night, or thereabouts. This Command by itself points out that by that time at least so much of the Qur’ān had been revealed as could be recited for that long.

Thirdly, in this section the Prophet has been exhorted to have patience at the excesses being committed by his opponents, and the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened with the torment. This shows that this section was revealed at a time when the Prophet had openly started preaching Islām and the opposition to him at Makkah had grown active and strong.

About the second section (v. 20) although many of the commentators have expressed the opinion that this too was sent down at Makkah, yet some other commentators regard it as a Madani Revelation, and this same opinion is confirmed by the subject matter of this section. For it mentions fighting in the way of God, and obviously, there could be no question of it at Makkah; it also contains the Command to pay the obligatory Zakāh, and it is fully confirmed that the Zakāh at a specific rate and with an exemption limit (nisab) was enjoined at Madinah.

### Theme and Subject Matter

In the first seven verses the Prophet has been commanded to the effect: “Prepare yourself to shoulder the responsibilities of the great Mission that has been entrusted to you; its practical form is that you should rise during the hours of night and stand up in Prayer for half the night, or for a little more or less of it.”

In v. 8-14, he has been exhorted to the effect: “Devote yourself exclusively to that God Who is the Owner of the whole universe, entrust all your affairs to Him with full satisfaction of the heart. Bear with patience whatever your opponents may utter against you. Do not be intimate with them. Leave their affair to God: He Himself will deal with them.”

Then, in v. 15-19, those of the people of Makkah, who were opposing the Prophet have been warned, so as to say: “We have sent a Messenger to you just as We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh. Just consider what fate the Pharaoh met when he did not accept the invitation of the Messenger of God. Supposing that you are not punished by a torment in this world, how will you save yourselves from the punishment for disbelief on the Day of Resurrection.”

This is the subject matter of the first section. The second section, according to a hadith from Sa’id bin Jubair, was sent down ten years later, and in it the initial Command given in connection with the Tahajjud Prayer, in the beginning of the first section, was curtailed. The new Command enjoined, “Offer as much of the Tahajjud Prayer as you easily can, but what the Muslims should particularly mind and attend to is the five times obligatory Prayer a day, they should establish it regularly and punctually; they should discharge their Zakāh

dues accurately; and they should spend their wealth with sincere intentions for the sake of God. In conclusion, the Muslims have been exhorted, saying: “Whatever good works you do in the world, will not go waste, but they are like the provision which a traveler sends up in advance to his permanent place of residence. Whatever good you send up from the world, you will find it with God, and the provision thus sent up is much better than what you will have to leave behind in the world, and with God you will also get a much better and richer reward than what you have actually sent up before.”

**Sūrah 73: al-Muzzammil**<sup>1648</sup>

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,  
the Most Merciful

1. O you who wraps himself [in clothing],<sup>1649</sup>
2. Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little -
3. Half of it - or subtract from it a little
4. Or add to it, and recite the Qur'ān with measured recitation.
5. Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word.<sup>1650</sup>
6. Indeed, the hours of the night are more effective for concurrence [of heart and tongue]<sup>1651</sup> and more suitable for words.<sup>1652</sup>
7. Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation.
8. And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with [complete] devotion.
9. [He is] the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so

take Him as Disposer of [your] affairs.<sup>1653</sup>

10. And be patient over what they say and avoid them with gracious avoidance.
11. And leave Me with [the matter of] the deniers, those of ease [in life], and allow them respite a little.
12. Indeed, with Us [for them] are shackles and burning fire
13. And food that chokes and a painful punishment -
14. On the Day the earth and the mountains will convulse and the mountains will become a heap of sand pouring down.
15. Indeed, We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness upon you just as We sent to Pharaoh a messenger.
16. But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger, so We seized him with a ruinous seizure.
17. Then how can you fear, if you disbelieve, a Day that will make the children white-haired?<sup>1654</sup>
18. The heaven will break apart therefrom;<sup>1655</sup> ever is His promise fulfilled.
19. Indeed, this is a reminder, so whoever wills may take to his Lord a way.
20. Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those

<sup>1648</sup> *Al-Muzzammil*: The One Who Wraps Himself (in clothing).

<sup>1649</sup> God addresses the Prophet, who was asleep, wrapped in his garments.

<sup>1650</sup> i.e., the revelation, which when descending on the Prophet bore down upon him with a great weight. Another meaning is "important ordinances."

<sup>1651</sup> Another accepted interpretation of the same words is "Indeed, arising at night is more difficult..." meaning that it will only be done by sincere believers and not others.

<sup>1652</sup> i.e., for recitation of the Qur'ān and for hearing and understanding it.

<sup>1653</sup> i.e., trust in God and rely upon Him.

<sup>1654</sup> Another meaning is "How can you avoid [punishment]" on such a Day?

<sup>1655</sup> From the terror of that Day.

with you. And God determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it<sup>1656</sup> and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'ān. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of God and others fighting for the cause of God. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give zakāh and loan God a goodly loan.<sup>1657</sup> And whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with God. It is better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of God. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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<sup>1656</sup> God has known that if they were to continue in such long periods of worship each night, the people would be caused much hardship.

<sup>1657</sup> In the form of charities and contributions to His cause.