

Sūrah 92: al-Layl

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter so closely resembles that of Sūrah ash-Shams that each Sūrah seems to be an explanation of the other. It is one and the same thing which has been explained in Sūrah ash-Shams in one way and in this Sūrah in another. This indicates that both these Sūrahs were sent down in about the same period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to distinguish between the two different ways of life and to explain the contrast between their ultimate ends and results. In view of the subject matter this Sūrah consists of two parts, the first part consisting of v. 1-11 and the second of v. 12-21.

In the first part, at the outset it has been pointed out that the strivings and doings that the individuals, nations and groups of mankind are engaged in in the world, are, in respect of their moral nature, as divergent as the day is from the night, and the male from the female. After this, according to the general style of the brief Sūrahs of the Qur'ān, three moral characteristics of one kind and three moral characteristics of the other kind have been presented as an illustration from among a vast collection of the strivings and activities of man, from which every man can judge which style of life is represented by one kind of the characteristics and which style of life by the other kind. Both these styles have been described in such brief, elegant, and pithy sentences that they move the heart and go down into memory as soon as one hears them. Characteristics of the first kind are that one should spend one's wealth, adopt God-consciousness and piety, and acknowledge the good as good. The second kind of the characteristics are that one should be miserly, should least care for God's pleasure and His displeasure, and should repudiate what is good and right. Then it has been stated that these two modes of action which are clearly divergent, cannot be equal and alike in respect of their results. But, just as they are divergent in their nature, so they are divergent in their results. The person (or group of persons) who adopts the first mode of action, God will make easy for him the correct way of life, so much so that doing good will become easy for him and doing evil difficult. On the contrary, he who adopts the second mode of life, God will make easy for him the difficult and hard way of life, so much so that doing evil will become easy for him and doing good difficult. This passage has been concluded with a most effective and touching sentence, saying: "This worldly wealth for the sake of which man is even prepared to risk his life: will not go down with him into the grave; therefore, what will it avail him after death?"

In the second part also three truths have been stated equally briefly. First, that God has not left man uninformed in the examination hall of the world, but He has taken on Himself the responsibility to tell him which one is the straight and right way out of the different ways of life. Here, there was no need to point out that by sending His Messenger and His Book. He has fulfilled His responsibility, for both the Messenger and the Book were present to afford the guidance. Second, that the Master of both the world and the Hereafter is God alone. If you seek the world, it is He Who will give it, and if you seek the Hereafter, again it is He Who will give it. Now, it is for you to decide what you should seek from Him. The third truth that has been stated is that the wretched one who rejects the good, which is being presented through the Messenger and the Book, and turns away from it, will have a blazing fire ready for him. As for the God fearing person who spends his wealth in a good cause, without any selfish motive, only for the sake of winning his Lord's good pleasure, his Lord will be pleased with him and will bless him with so much that he will be well pleased with Him.

Sūrah 92: al-Layl¹⁸⁰⁵

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

1. By the night when it covers¹⁸⁰⁶
2. And [by] the day when it appears
3. And [by] He who created the male and female,
4. Indeed, your efforts are diverse.
5. As for he who gives and fears God
6. And believes in the best [reward],
7. We will ease him toward ease.
8. But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need
9. And denies the best [reward],
10. We will ease him toward difficulty.
11. And what will his wealth avail him when he falls?¹⁸⁰⁷
12. Indeed, [incumbent] upon Us is guidance.
13. And indeed, to Us belongs the Hereafter and the first [life].
14. So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing.
15. None will [enter to] burn therein except the most wretched one
16. Who had denied and turned away.
17. But the righteous one will avoid it -
18. [He] who gives [from] his wealth to purify himself
19. And not [giving] for anyone who has [done him] a favor to be rewarded¹⁸⁰⁸
20. But only seeking the countenance of his Lord, Most High.
21. And he is going to be satisfied.

¹⁸⁰⁵ *Al-Layl*: The Night.

¹⁸⁰⁶ With darkness.

¹⁸⁰⁷ i.e., when he dies or is destroyed. It can also mean when he falls into the Hellfire.

¹⁸⁰⁸ i.e., without intending reciprocation for some benefit to himself.