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Metaphysical & jurisprudential implications of the discussion surrounding the obligatory nature of Ṣalāt al-Layl: Sūrat al-Muzammil as a case

Sūrat al-Muzammil is arguably the third Makkan chapter revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) in the order of *tanzīl* (revelation). Mufasssīrūn (exegetes) consider the chapter's last verse to be revealed in Madīnah signalling the obligatory nature of *al-ṣalawāt al-yawmīyah* (the daily prayers) thereby abrogating the initially obligatory nature of *ṣalāt al-layl* (the prayer of the night) rendering it as *mustaḥab* (recommended) instead. It is within this discussion of whether or not *ṣalāt al-layl* was abrogated and why that we are presented with perhaps the earliest case study of *āyāt al-aḥkām* (the verses of regulation) in the Quran.

My paper intends to critically explore the relationship between *ṣalāt al-layl* and *al-ṣalawāt al-yawmīyah* with specific reference to their *asbab al-nuzūl* (the reasons of revelation) amidst Prophet Muḥammad's own challenges in preparing himself for the *qawlan thaqīla* ("a weighty word", Q73:5) being revealed upon his soul. I humbly argue that the concept of *āyāt al-aḥkām* should first be examined through the lens of the developing soul of Prophet Muḥammad as opposed to being jurisprudential regulations imposed upon himself or Muslims generally. This lens brings into focus the metaphysical and spiritual reasons behind prayer itself.

Secondly, there is evidence from *aḥādīth* (narrations) in *tafāsīr* (exegeses) that those who prayed *ṣalāt al-layl* with the Prophet found it difficult to perform the prayer – either due to its stipulated time or duration. However, it appears those who found it difficult to perform this prayer did not perform its *qaḍā'* (lapsed prayer). This may have distinct juristic implications on whether or not *qaḍā'* is applicable on those adjusting to new rites in Islam such as children who become *bāligh* (mature) and converts who are new to the faith. Thirdly, the above analysis may help us to expand the dimensions of *istiṭā'a* (capability) in the performance of ritual obligations through a consideration of one's psychology, spiritual and physical capacity.



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