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TERMS OF PERSONAL PRAYER IN THE QUR'ĀN:
CONTEXTUAL AND EMOTIONAL ANALYSIS¹

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Abstract: *This article is dedicated to the terms for personal prayer (du 'ā' and other derivative forms) in the Qur'ān. Occurrence of these terms in the text is analyzed quantitatively with regard to the chronology of the Qur'ānic text. They appear mainly in the sūras of the II and III Meccan periods, and more rarely in the Medinan period, contrary to the term for communal prayer ṣalāt which is frequent in the Medinan sūras. The study shows that they are used in a close number of interrelated contexts. These contexts could be described as follows: people's ingratitude towards the Almighty God and their inclination towards pagan deities; their appeal to God in the time of danger; Allāh's mercy to the righteous calling Him, including His response to them and helping a righteous man, like Zakarīyā and Ibrāhīm, to have a child. Emotional aspect of these fragments was analyzed as well. The Qur'ānic fragments, containing terms for the personal prayer, are emotionally intense and their modality varies from positive to negative, often containing both of these contrast evaluations. These traits and the variety of related topics and their emotional modality could be explained by diverse circumstances of Muḥammad's prophetic mission, as his social role evolved from an outcast preacher to a head of the theocratic state. The variety of topics and their emotional modality could be a consequence of the different character of audiences during the different stages of monotheistic preach delivered by Prophet Muhammad.*

Keywords: Qur'ān, chronology, prayer, du 'ā', revelation, preach, Qur'ānic terminology, emotional analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Prayer is one of the main practices in the religious systems of the world. Prayer can be personal or collective; it could be performed spoken aloud or silently. The text of a prayer can be an improvisation or a rigidly established canonic pattern, besides that it can also occupy a transitional position, being built more or less arbitrarily from established and generally accepted formulas. Typologically, there is a wide variety of prayers and here I refer to both the circumstances of their reproduction and their text structure. The fact that the prayer presupposes a text or an addressee makes it *sui generis* a communicative act. Therefore, “a common characteristic of prayer is its narrative quality – its potential as a sense-making discursive act” [Baquedano-López, 1998, p. 198]. However, the prayer does not necessarily imply addressing a deity with a request – the contact itself, close personal and emotional connection with supreme forces is important: “the meaning of prayer as a religious act consists ... of transcending” [Pylaev, 2008, p. 55].

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According to W. James, one of the pioneers of phenomenology of religion, “the prayer in this wide sense is the very soul and essence of religion” [James, 2002, p. 358]. Taking into account the aforementioned facts, one can say that the prayer is an important factor in a person’s spiritual life and one of the strongest emotional experiences, especially for those who share the same traditional worldviews.

This paper includes the analysis of narrative structures, being devoted to the emotional aspect of passages from the Qur’ān where the prayer is described. Moreover, the research also focuses on personal prayer as a call to God (or pagan deities). The subject of the study is the context of the Qur’ānic passages where the terms *ṣalāt* and *du‘ā’* (with derivative forms) are used and could be correlated with the concept of ‘prayer’. The focus of the paper is not only the emotional aspect of corresponding Qur’ānic narratives, but also their correlation with specific periods within Muḥammad’s prophetic mission, since the style and tone of the Qur’ānic message largely changes, depending on the circumstances of its revelation. At the same time, studying the meaning and the context evolution of the key words and concepts of the Qur’ān over time can help to trace the formation and development of basic ideas and concepts of Islam in the first Muslim community.

OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES AND METHODOLOGY

In the past years researchers have already studied the relation between the change in emotional ‘coloring’ of Qur’ānic text and the chronology of its revelation. For instance, Th. Nöldeke dedicated a significant part of his book to the psychological aspects of Muḥammad’s revelations. He also connected changes in the style of sūras with the stages of the Prophet’s mission, and, consequently, with the specific circumstances of their revelation [Nöldeke et al., 2013]. In addition, stylistic peculiarities of the Qur’ānic text in relation to its chronology were studied by W. Muir, H. Grimme and R. Bell; a summary table of their chronological classification of sūras and verses of the Qur’ān can be found in R. Bell’s generalizing work, later revised and supplemented by M. Watt [Watt, 1970, p. 205–213]. As for the Russian scholars, E.A. Rezvan studied the changes of style and emotional overtones of the Qur’ān in connection with the change of social roles played by Muḥammad [Rezvan, 2001].

The ideas concerning relationships between a person and higher forces in pre-Islamic Arabia were extensively discussed by T. Izutsu in his monography [Izutsu, 2002]. A study on intertextual links between the Qur’ān and biblical liturgical texts, namely psalms, was also published [Neuwirth, 2010]. However, the prayer, its description and conceptualization in the text of the Qur’ān, as well as correlations and intersections between various terms with the meaning of ‘prayer’ have to be studied further [Böwering, 2004, p. 228]. Some issues associated with the emotional analysis of the Qur’ānic text has been already studied in previous works [Bauer, 2017; Bernikova, Redkin, 2018]. Nevertheless, the term ‘(personal) prayer’ *du‘ā’* and its derivatives are used in the Qur’ānic text both with positive and negative emotional connotations [Böwering, 2004, p. 229] and this fact leaves a wide field for research of its occurrence and usage by applying the methods of contextual and emotional analysis.

Such a study can be accomplished predominantly by using computer methods and modern data technologies which process the Arabic text and analyse the quantitative data. Comparing the quantitative indicators of individual verses and sūras helps one to periodize the text of the Qur’ān quite accurately and to identify patterns of Qur’ānic text ‘construction’ related to the chronology of its revelation [Schmid, 2010]. The author of the article used the Qur’ān Corpus [*The Quranic Arabic Corpus*] as the main source of quantitative data, unless specifically indicated in the corresponding reference. A part of the calculations was carried out in collaboration with N.A. Kizhaeva using Python script and CAMEL Tools library.

TERMS FOR THE CONCEPT OF 'PRAYER' IN THE QUR'ĀN

As already mentioned, according to the Islamic ritual and creed, there are two types of religious practices that we could describe using the term 'prayer', – *ṣalāt* and *du'ā'*. The first of these two is *ṣalāt*, a ritual prayer practice performed five times a day. The Islamic dogma says that performing this ritual prayer is a duty for Muslims. Its rites and order are strictly prescribed and go back to the commandments by the Prophet Muhammad himself. The term *ṣalāt* is derived from the Aramaic word for 'prayer' and was adopted by the Arabs through Syriac. This word had entered the Arabic language before the rise of Islam and was recorded even in pre-Islamic poetry [Jeffery, 2007, p. 198–199]. The first listeners of the Qur'ān were undoubtedly aware of this word, since it was widely and regularly used in the Revelation without any substantial explanations. At the same time, the Qur'ān comments on ways to properly perform ritual prayer, and also describes the details of its implementation and preliminary conditions for its performance. This fact creates the impression that the audience was familiar with the concept of ritual prayer and did not need any additional clarification of its nature and basic essence.

The term *ṣalāt* occurs 78 times in the Qur'ān in singular form (65 times with the definite article *al-*, twice in a genitive construction, and 11 times with a pronoun affixed) and only five times in plural [Böwering, 2004, p. 217]. The usage frequency of the word *ṣalāt* in the Qur'ānic text is extremely uneven. This word does not occur in the earliest sūras of the first Meccan period ('poetic'), and its appearance as an established Islamic term can be attributed to the period between 620 and 624. At the same time, half of all occurrences of the term in the Qur'ānic text belongs to the Medinan period, i. e. in approximately 20% of the text [Monnot, 1995, p. 925]. This is not surprising, as the crystallization of the basic institutions of Islamic dogma and ritual took place during the Medinan period of Muḥammad's preaching.

However, there is another type of prayer in Islamic ritual practice. It is a kind of personal, voluntary appeal to the God. Unlike strictly regulated ritual prayer, performed five times a day with strictly established Arabic formulas, this appeal or invocation could be made at any time, in any language. It usually contains some kind of request to the Almighty or an expression of gratitude to Him. To define this prayer, Muslims use the term *du'ā'*, derived from the root *d-ʿ-w* with the general meaning 'to call', 'to appeal'. Words derived from the root *d-ʿ-w* occur 212 times in the Qur'ān, including 170 times in the verbal form *da'ā* 'to call', used in a wide variety of contexts. These can be the calls of a person to the One God or pagan deities, the God's appeal to human beings, and the calls of people addressed to each other. Concerning our study, we are mainly interested in the contexts where the call comes from people, and its addressee is a higher force or a supernatural being. Since the paper is focused on studying the conceptualization of personal type of prayer in Qur'ānic text, here we will consider only nominal forms derived from this verb and meaning 'appeal to the God / pagan deities'. Further in the paper, the term '(personal) prayer' will be used in this meaning. The form *du'ā'* occurs 22 times in the text of the Qur'ān in total, with the aforementioned meaning – 11 times, the form *da'wā* – 6 and 4 times, and the form *da'wat* – 4 and 3 times, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Occurrence of lexemes with the meaning '(personal) prayer' in the text of the Qur'ān

Word form	Occurrence in the text	With meaning 'prayer'
<i>du'ā'</i>	22	11
<i>da'wā</i>	4	3
<i>da'wat</i>	6	4

It is interesting to note the uneven distribution of these three lexemes in the text of the Qur'ān from the perspective of the text revelation chronology. For the latter, Th. Nöldeke's classification was used [Watt, Bell, 1970, p. 205–213], and the presence of Medinan verses in the Meccan sūras (and vice versa) was also taken into account. Thus, the form *du'ā'* is used mainly in the Medinan (3:38; 14:39; 14:40²) and Meccan sūras of the II period, characterized by wide usage of God's epithet *Rahmān* (17:11; 19:4; 19:48; 25:77; 41:49; 41:51; 46:51). Only once this lexeme occurs in a sūra of the III period ('prophetic') (13:14). The form *da'wā* is used three times in the sūras of the II Meccan period (10:10 (twice); 21:15), and appears once in the sūra *al-A'rāf*, one of the 'prophetic' sūras of the III Meccan period (7:5). The word *da'wat* occurs once in the Medinan sūra *al-Baqara* (2:186), once again in the Medinan and twice in the 'prophetic' sūras of the III Meccan period (10:89; 13:14). None of the forms listed above is found in this meaning in the earliest sūras of the I Meccan period ('poetic'). Data on the usage frequency of lexemes depending on the chronology is summarized in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2.

Frequency of distribution of lexemes with the meaning '(personal) prayer' in the Qur'ānic text by chronological periods.

Word form	Chronological period of the revelation			
	I Meccan	II Meccan	III Meccan	Medinan
<i>du'ā'</i>	0	7	1	3
<i>da'wā</i>	0	3	1	0
<i>da'wat</i>	0	0	2	1

THEMATIC CONTEXTS OF THE TERM '(PERSONAL) PRAYER' IN THE TEXT OF THE QUR'ĀN

All three of these forms are used with the meaning of 'call to God / deities'. The semantic contexts in which the term '(personal) prayer' is used generate a number of recurring motives that can often be associated with repeating formulas.

a) Chronologically, the first motive of '(personal) prayer' used in the Qur'ānic text is the issue of people's impatience and ingratitude. When they get into trouble, they turn to God with a prayer asking for help, but fall into despair when not seeing an immediate result. Then people begin to grumble against God and fall into disbelief: "*Man wearies not of praying for good (lā yas'amu l-insānu min du'ā'i l-ḥayri); but when evil visits him, then he is cast down and desperate... And when We bless man, he turns away and withdraws aside; but when evil visits him, he is full of endless prayers (fa-dū du'ā'in 'arīḍin)*" (41:49, 51)³. It is no coincidence that this fragment is found in the sūra 41 *Fuṣṣilat*, referring to the II Meccan period. The main ideas of the sūra are a monotheistic sermon, a call for gratitude towards God and sharp criticism against those who do not recognize the greatness of God and are proud of themselves - the peoples of '*Ad* and '*Tamūd*. Similar appeals can be found in other fragments, also related to the II Meccan period. People are impatient and want to receive things which are both good and bad, but dear to their hearts from above: "*Man prays for evil, as he prays for good (du'ā'uhu bi-l-ḥayri); man is ever hasty.*" (17:11). In an attempt to achieve what they want, people invoke other deities besides Allāh, and

² The last two cases are from the sūra *Ibrāhīm*, which is one of the 'prophetic' sūras of the III Meccan period, however, according to the classification of Th. Nöldeke, the group of verses (38-42) of this sūra were revealed in Medina [Watt, Bell 1970, p. 207].

³ Here and below, the meaning translation of the Qur'ān are given according to the translation of A.J. Arberry [The Quran Interpreted, 1996].

then their prayer is in vain: *"And who is further astray than he who calls, apart from God, upon such a one as shall not answer him till the Day of Resurrection? Such as are heedless of their calling (wa-hum 'an du 'ā 'uḥim ḡāfilūn)"* (46:5).

b) The motive of viciousness of a person who turns to God only in trouble closely echoes the idea of punishing sinners whose prayer will not be heard. This story is found in sūras of the II Meccan (25:77) and the III Meccan periods (7:5; 21:15). In these fragments, the main idea is that God will punish those who declared His words a lie, regardless of their prayers (25:77). At the same time, the idea of the inevitability of divine punishment, despite any prayer, is clearly expressed at the beginning of the sūra *al-A'raf*, which describes divine anger towards the unrighteous inhabitants of various settlements: *"How many a city We have destroyed! Our might came upon it at night, or while they took their ease in the noontide, and they but cried (wa-mā kāna da 'wāhum), when Our might came upon there, 'We were evildoers'."* (7:4-5). The same motive occurs in the sūra *al-Anbiyā'*: *"They said, 'Alas for us! We have been evildoers'. So they ceased not to cry (fa-mā zālat tilka da 'wāhum), until We made them stubble, silent and still"* (21:14-15).

c) Another motive has a somewhat 'diffused' structure and could be described as follows: Allāh answers the prayers of the righteous, while the sinners' call to other deities besides the Almighty God remain unanswered. It is worth mentioning that all the cases where the term *da 'wat* is used with the meaning of '(personal) prayer' refer to this motive. It makes sense to present all cases of the use of this term. It appears in the story of Mūsā in the sūra *Baqara*: *"And when My servants question thee concerning Me - I am near to answer the call of the caller (da 'wata d-dā'ī), when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me; haply so they will go aright"* (2:186). The same word is used in the story of Mūsā where he is assured that God heard the prayers from him and his brother Hārūn: *"He said, 'Your prayer (da 'watukumā) is answered; so go you straight, and follow not the way of those that know not'."* (10:89). The parallel use of the terms *da 'wat* and *du 'ā* in the same Qur'ānic verse deserves special mention, as it contrasts the prayer addressed to Allah Almighty and the prayer of the polytheists: *"To Him is the call (da 'wat) of truth; and those upon whom they call, apart from Him, answer them nothing, but it is as a man who stretches out his hands to water that it may reach his mouth, and it reaches it not. The prayer (du 'ā) of the unbelievers goes only astray"* (13:14).

This motive is close to the motive of the righteous people praying in paradise, not so much asking for something from the God as praising Him: *"Their cry (da 'wāhum) therein, 'Glory to Thee, O God, 'their greeting, 'Peace,' and their cry (da 'wāhum) ends, 'Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being'"* (10:10). It is noteworthy that the phrase by which "their cry ends" textually coincides with the beginning of the first sūra *al-Fātiḥa* (*al-ḥamdu li-l-lāhi rabbi l-'ālamīna*). This sūra is widely recited by the Muslims during a ritual prayer performed on various occasions, and as an invocation to God during personal prayer.

d) The last, and rather specific motive with the term '(personal) prayer' in its description is the appeal to famous prophets and righteous people of the past with a request to give the believer offspring. This motive can be classified as a separate plot line, since the fragments of the Qur'ānic text containing it constitute a refrain, in which the following thought is repeated: the God 'hearest prayer', He answers the call of the righteous addressed to Him. Examples are the stories of Zakarīyā: *"Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord saying, 'Lord, give me of Thy goodness a goodly offspring. Yea, Thou hearest prayer (samī 'u d-du 'ā)'"* (3:38); and Ibrāhīm: *"Praise be to God, who has given me, though I am old, Ishmael and Isaac; surely my Lord hears the petition. My Lord, make me a performer of the prayer; and of my seed. Our Lord, and receive my petition (du 'ā)'"* (14:39-40). It is not a coincidence that the same plot and the same characters, Zakarīyā and Ibrāhīm, appear in sūra *Maryam*. Furthermore, there is a vivid resemblance between the story of Maryam and the miraculous birth of 'Īsā (19:4), on the one hand, and the birth of Ishāq and

Ya'qūb from the aged Ibrāhīm and his wife (19:48), on the other. In the latter case, besides the divine mercy towards the righteous, there is also criticism of polytheism: *"Now I will go apart from you and that you call upon, apart from God; I will call upon my Lord, and haply I shall not be, in calling upon my Lord (bi-du'ā'i rabbī), unprosperous. So, when he went apart from them and that they were serving, apart from God, We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and each We made a Prophet"* (19:48-49).

In the light of the aforementioned, it is obvious that the terms for personal prayer are used in the Qur'ān in contexts describing the relationship between a person and God or pagan deities. At the same time, the terms *du'ā'*, *da'wā*, *da'wat* are used both in negative (divine punishment, calls to pagan deities, human ingratitude) and positive ways (the prayer of the righteous and the God's answer to it). These terms appear in the Qur'ān with their religious meaning only in context of the II Meccan period, and after that they were widely used up to the chronologically latest passages of the Qur'ān. The motives in which the terms denoting personal prayer are used, along with data on the chronology of the revelation of corresponding fragments, are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3.

Plot motives, revelation periods and emotional coloring of the fragments in which terms with the meaning '(personal) prayer' are used

Verse	Form	Period	Motive	Emotion
<i>du'ā'</i>				
(3:38)	<i>l-du'ā'i</i>	Med.	d	+
(13:14)	<i>du'ā'u</i>	III Mec.	c	-
(14:39)	<i>l-du'ā'i</i>	Med.	d	+
(14:40)	<i>du'ā'i</i>	Med.	d	+
(17:11)	<i>du'ā'ahu</i>	II Mec.	a	-
(19:4)	<i>bidu'ā'ika</i>	II Mec.	d	0
(19:48)	<i>bidu'ā'i</i>	II Mec.	d	0
(25:77)	<i>du'ā'uku</i>	II Mec.	b	-
(41:49)	<i>du'ā'i</i>	II Mec.	a	-
(41:51)	<i>du'ā'in</i>	II Mec.	a	-
(46:5)	<i>du'āi'him</i>	II Mec.	a	-
<i>da'wā</i>				
(7:5)	<i>da'wāhum</i>	III Mec.	b	-
(10:10)	<i>da'wāhum</i>	II Mec.	c	+
(10:10)	<i>da'wāhum</i>	II Mec.	c	+
(21:15)	<i>da'wāhum</i>	II Mec.	b	-
<i>da'wat</i>				
(2:186)	<i>da'wata</i>	Med.	c	+
(10:89)	<i>da'watukumā</i>	III Mec.	c	0
(13:14)	<i>da'watu</i>	III Mec.	c	-

A PERSON'S APPEAL TO GOD: ANALYSIS OF THE EMOTIONAL COMPONENT

As demonstrated by T. Izutsu, the personal prayer in the Qur'ānic worldview is a part of a complex communication system between a person and God [Izutsu, 2002]. In this worldview, God sends down (*nazala*) the Revelation (*waḥy*) to the prophets directly or through the mediation of angels. But this linguistic relationship between the God and a man is not one-sided. In other

words, instead of always remaining passive, a person, for their part, sometimes initiates dialogue with God (or deities), addressing Him through linguistic signs. As a result, a phenomenon that structurally corresponds to Revelation arises. However, it has an opposite direction, since it is a direct verbal communication that goes ‘upwards’, from a person to God. This is the prayer or invocation (*du‘ā*). [Izutsu, 2002, p. 208–209]. The concept of *du‘ā* can be found in a very early layer of the Qur’ānic prayer vocabulary, which is confirmed by the use of this term both in relation to the Almighty God and to various pre-Islamic deities [Böwering, 2004, p. 228]. A person relies on higher forces in a situation that surpasses the ordinary, in moments of imminent danger, in the face of death, i. e. in the moments that adherents of existential philosophy would call ‘limit situation’ [Izutsu, 2002, p. 209–210]. This explains the high degree of emotional intensity of the fragments in which Arabic terms derived from the root *d-‘w* are used with the meaning of ‘(personal) prayer’. Let us look into these fragments and the contexts of their appearance in the Qur’ānic narrative more carefully.

It is important to note (this is also true for the considerations above), that the extraction of motives and evaluation of emotional component in a passage is not a trivial task, since that passage can be a part of a larger fragment. So, for example, in the verse (10:89), on the one hand, we observe a positive connotation - the God answers the prayers of Mūsā and Hārūn. On the other hand, this motive is included into a wider context that has a negative emotional connotation. It is the story of divine wrath that caused the punishment of Fir‘awn and the drowning of his troops. Moreover, this story is a part of a larger story about the Exodus of Jews from Egypt, i. e. a story about the good that God had done for them through Mūsā and Hārūn. It is important to remember that “the constant repetition of phrases and, often, plots is a fundamentally important feature of the Qur’ān. It consists of many “parallel places” that echo other places of the Qur’ān that are similar in plot or expression. This is how several dimensions of the Qur’ānic text are created” [Piotrovsky, 1991, p. 23]. This makes it “polyphonic”, multidimensional, which creates difficulties for the isolation of individual motives and emotional states.

Considering this circumstance, it seems appropriate to take exclusively the immediate context into account, i. e. emotional tone of the particular verse in which the word meaning ‘(personal) prayer’ appears. The modality of interaction between God and people was chosen as a criterion for evaluating degree of emotional tonality. The verses that refer to divine mercy and calling to God with a request for something good were attested as positive (+), and those talking about punishments, human ingratitude, appeal to other deities besides Allāh were marked as negative (-). Verses, which simply communicate some information without a clearly distinguishable moral or emotional assessment, or (much more often) contrast both the negative and positive ways of the relationship between God and a person were considered neutral (0). Information about the emotional tonality of the verses that use terms meaning ‘(personal) prayer’ is also given in the table (Table 3).

It is interesting to note that fragments with the most negative emotional tonality were found in the earliest of fragments we present here – mainly in the sūras revealed during the II Meccan period (17:11; 25:77; 41:49, 51; 46:5; 21:15). They contain reproaches of ingratitude aimed at people willing to pray only in the times of trouble and stories about divine punishment. The only exception is the verse (7:5) which constitutes the very beginning of the sūra *al-A‘rāf* of the III Meccan period.

The most positive contexts, namely the stories of a miraculous birth as a consequence of a righteous man’s or a prophet’s prayer, can be found in the sūras from the later stages of the Qur’ānic text formation, the III Meccan (19:4, 48) and Medinan (3 :38; 14:39; 14:40) periods. At the same time, the fragments of the III Meccan period describing divine intervention in the affairs of Zakarīyā and Ibrāhīm in the sūra *Maryam*, the righteous men turned to God paying special

attention to their plight and miserable conditions. Zakarīyā, asking the Almighty for offspring, complains about his bodily weakness and old age (19:4). Ibrāhīm, informing his father of his intention to ask God for offspring, delivers a whole speech condemning the polytheists (19:48). Late Meccan and Medinan sūras also include fragments that describe God as having heard the prayer and answering it, in contrast to pagan deities, calling whom is meaningless (2:186 (twice); 10:89; 13:14). It is noteworthy that the word *daʿwat* is used exclusively in this context as a religious term.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis above allows us to draw a number of conclusions about the use and role of terms meaning ‘(personal) prayer’ in the Qurʾānic text. First, in contrast to the word *ṣalāt*, denoting ritual prayer, they are most often found mainly in sūras of the II and III Meccan periods, rather than in the Medinan sūras. This could be explained by the fact that the Medinan sūras are largely devoted to explaining and establishing the ritual component of Islam, describing the legal institutions and the political situation of the young religious community. Indeed, “the sermons of Muḥammad, especially delivered in Medina, had a special form of organization. In particular, they included not only the revelation itself, but also its explanation” [Rezvan, 2001, p. 113]. As for the Meccan sūras, addressed to an audience skeptical of the Prophet, they were focused mainly on moral and ethical preaching and called for strict observance of monotheism, criticizing addressing anyone other than the Almighty. In addition, the emotional component is especially strong in the Meccan sūras as they were aimed to convert a person to a new religion. Thus, forcing a listener to shudder at the stories about the manifestation of divine anger and empathize with the prophets and righteous men of the past, these fragments of the sūras urged to invoke the One God and hope for his grace, rejecting the pagan deities.

The same considerations may explain another observation: the tone of the verses softens with the chronology of their fixation. While the earlier fragments contain the most emotionally negative contexts for the use of the term ‘(personal) prayer’, the later verses carry a more positive message. After all, the Meccan sūras were sent down primarily for a skeptical audience, which required examples of the consequences of human pride and disobedience. However, in the Medinan period, the sermon was directed to the people who had already believed, the companions and assistants of the prophet, who had to be encouraged and supported during the formative period of the community consolidation and its struggle with the hostile tribes of Yaʿrib and the Meccan polytheists.

It is also interesting to note the absence of nominal religious terms with the meaning ‘(personal) prayer’ in the earliest fragments of the Qurʾānic text – the Meccan sūras of the I (‘poetic’) period. This is also true for the term *ṣalāt*, which means ‘ritual prayer’. The probable reason for this, on the one hand, is that the terminological apparatus of the emerging religion was not fully formed at that time. On the other hand, the Meccan sūras, which describe the Day of Judgment and the impending catastrophe of a planetary scale, leave little room for dialogue between God and a man – the latter appears in them mainly as a silent witness of the grandiose apocalyptic events.

Summing up, we can say that the emotional coloring of the Qurʾānic fragments describing personal prayer directly depends on the circumstances of their revelation, as well as characteristics of the audience and the role played by the Prophet. The tone of the verses on prayer softens gradually from the Meccan to the Medinan period. At the same time, the narratives of prayer appear to be the most significant for the Meccan sūras of the II and III periods, which contain stories about the relationship between God and a person in a historical context.

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