INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Sūrat Al-Burāj, 85.

This is one of the earlier Makkah Sūras, chronologically cognate with S. xci. The subject-matter is the persecution of Allah's votaries. Allah watches over His own, and will deal with the enemies of Truth as He dealt with them in the past.
In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Sky, with its constellations;
2. By the promised Day (Of Judgment);
3. By one that witnesses, And the subject of the witness;
4. Woe to the makers Of the pit (of fire).

6051. Here is an appeal to three Signs in verses 1-3, and the substantive proposition is in verses 4-8, a denunciation of wicked persecutors of the votaries of Allah, persecutors who burnt righteous men for their Faith. The three Signs are: (1) the Glorious Sky, with the broad belt of the Constellations marking the twelve Signs of the Zodiac; (2) the Day of Judgment, when all evil will be punished; and (3) certain Persons that will be witnesses, and certain Persons or things that will be the subjects of the witness. See the notes following.

6052. See n. 1950 to xv. 16. The Stars of the Zodiac as well as of other Constellations are like the eyes of the Night. It may be that crimes are committed in the darkness of the night. But countless eyes are watching all the time, and every author of evil will be brought to book.

6053. The Day of Judgment, when the Sinner will have to give an account of every deed, open or hidden, is not merely a matter of speculation. It is definitely promised in revelation, and will inevitably come to pass. Woe then to the Sinners for their crimes.

6054. The literal meaning is clear, but its metaphorical application has been explained in a variety of ways by different Commentators. The words are fairly comprehensive, and should, I think, be understood in connection with Judgment. There the Witnesses may be: (1) the Prophets (iii. 81); Allah Himself (iii. 81, and x. 61); the Recording Angels (l. 21); the Sinner’s own misused limbs (xxiv. 24); his record of deeds (xvii. 14); or the Sinner himself (xvii. 14). The subject of the witness may be the deed or crime, or the Sinner against whom the testimony cries out. The appeal to these things means that the Sinner cannot possibly escape the consequences of his crime. He should repent, seek Allah’s Mercy, and amend his life.

6055. Who were the makers of the pit of fire in which they burn people for their Faith? The words are perfectly general, and we need not search for particular names, except by way of illustration. In ancient history, and in Mediæval Europe, many lives were sacrificed at the stake because the victims did not conform to the established religion. In Arab tradition there is the story of Abraham: Nimröd tries to burn him to death, but
5. Fire supplied (abundantly)  
With Fuel:
6. Behold! they sat\textsuperscript{6056}  
Over against the (fire),
7. And they witnessed  
(All) that they were doing  
Against the Believers.
8. And they ill-treated them  
For no other reason than  
That they believed in Allah,  
Exalted in Power,  
Worthy of all Praise!–
9. Him to Whom belongs  
The dominion of the heavens  
And the earth!  
And Allah is Witness  
To all things.\textsuperscript{6057}
10. Those who persecute  
The Believers, men and women,  
And do not turn  
In repentance, will have  
The Chastisement of Hell:

\textsuperscript{6056} The persecutors sat calmly to gloat over the agonies of their victims in the well-fed fire.

\textsuperscript{6057} It is suggested that the persecutors will richly deserve to be punished in the Fire of Hell. That Punishment will be far more real and lasting than the undeserved cruelty which they inflicted on men for their Faith in the One True God.
They will have the Chastisement Of the Burning Fire.\textsuperscript{6058}

11. For those who believe
   And do righteous deeds,
   Will be Gardens.\textsuperscript{6059}
   Beneath which Rivers flow:
   That is the great Triumph.\textsuperscript{6060}

12. Truly strong is the Grip
   Of thy Lord.

13. It is He Who Creates
   From the very beginning,\textsuperscript{6061}
   And He can restore (life).

14. And He is the Oft-Forgiving,
   Full of loving-kindness,

15. Lord of the Throne,
   Full of all glory,

16. Doer (without let)\textsuperscript{6062}
   Of all that He intends.

\textsuperscript{6058} The “Chastisement of the Burning Fire” has been mentioned here in addition to the “Penalty of Hell”. This assumes a special significance in the background of the cruel burning of the Faithful by the “makers of the pit”. These criminals would be duly retributed by being subjected to a similar kind of suffering that they had caused their innocent victims.

\textsuperscript{6059} Cf. v. 119, ix. 72 and xxii. 19.

\textsuperscript{6060} Cf. v. 119, n. 833.

\textsuperscript{6061} For the various words for “Creation” and the ideas implied in them, see n. 120 to ii. 117.

\textsuperscript{6062} Allah’s Will is itself the Word and the Deed. There is no interval between them. He does not change His mind. No circumstances whatever can come between His Will and the execution thereof. Such are His Power and His Glory. Compare it with that of men, described in the next two verses.
6063. In contrast to the real, all-embracing, and eternal power of Allah, what are the forces of man at their best? Two examples are mentioned. (1) Pharaoh was a proud monarch of a powerful kingdom, with resources and organisation, material, moral, and intellectual, as good as any in the world. When he pitted himself against Allah's Prophet, he and his forces were destroyed. See lxxix. 15-26. (2) The Thamud were great builders, and had a high standard of material civilization. But they defied the law of Allah and perished. See vii. 73-79, and n. 1043.

6064. In spite of the great examples of the past, by which human might and skill were shown to have availed nothing when the law of Allah was broken, the unbelievers persist (in all ages) in defying that law. But Allah will know how to deal with them.

6065. Allah encompasses every thing. But the wicked will find themselves defeated not only in conditions that they foresee, but from all sorts of unexpected directions, perhaps from behind them, i.e., from the very people or circumstances which in their blindness they despised or thought of as helping them.

6066. "Inscribed in a Tablet Preserved", i.e. Allah's Message is not ephemeral. It is eternal. The "Tablet" is "preserved" or guarded from corruption: xv. 9: for Allah's Message must endure for ever. That Message is the "Mother of the book": see n. 347 to iii. 7.