

Sūrah 37: as-Sāffāt

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show that this Sūrah probably was sent down in the middle of the Makkan period or perhaps in the last stage of the middle Makkan period. The style clearly indicates that antagonism is raging strong in the background and the Prophet and his Companions are passing through very difficult and discouraging circumstances.

Subject Matter and Theme

The disbelievers of Makkah have been severely warned for their attitude of mockery and derision with which they were responding to the Prophet's message of Tawhid (Oneness of God), and the Hereafter and for their utter refusal to accept and acknowledge his claim to Prophethood. In the end they have been plainly warned that the Prophet whom they are mocking and ridiculing will overwhelm them in spite of their power and pelf and they will find the army of God encamping in the very courtyards of their houses (v. 171-179). This notice was given at a time when there appeared no chance whatever of the Prophet's success and triumph. The Muslims (who have been called God's army in these verses) were being made the target of severe persecution. Three quarters of their population had already emigrated and hardly 40 to 50 of the Companions were left with the Prophet in Makkah who were experiencing all sorts of the excesses with utter helplessness. Under such circumstances in view of the apparent conditions no one could believe that the Prophet and the handful of his ill equipped Companions would ultimately attain dominance. The people rather thought that the new movement would end and be buried in the ravines of Makkah. But hardly 15 to 16 years had passed when on the conquest of Makkah precisely the same thing happened of which the disbelievers had been forewarned. Along with administering warnings this Sūrah has done full justice also to the theme of inducement and instruction in a balanced way. Brief but impressive arguments have been given about the validity of the doctrines of Tawhid (Oneness of God) and the Hereafter. Criticism has been made of the creed of the polytheist, showing the absurdity of their beliefs; they have been informed of the evil consequences of their deviations which have been contrasted with the splendid results of the faith and righteous acts.

The most instructive of the historical narratives presented in this Sūrah is the important event of the pious life of the Prophet Abraham who became ready to sacrifice his only son as soon as he received an inspiration from God. In this there was a lesson not only for the disbelieving Quraysh who waxed proud of their blood relationship with him but also for the Muslims who had believed in God and His Messenger. By narrating this event they were told what is the essence and the real spirit of Islām and how a true believer should be ready to sacrifice his all for the pleasure and approval of God after he has adopted it as his Faith and Creed. In these verses they were given the good news that they should not be disheartened at the hardships and difficulties they had to encounter in the beginning for in the end they alone would attain dominance and the standard bearers of falsehood who appeared to be dominant at the time would be overwhelmed and vanquished at their hands. A few years later the turn the events took proved that it was not an empty consolation but an inevitable reality of which they had been foretold in order to strengthen their hearts.

Sūrah 37: as-Sāffāt¹²⁰¹

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

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| <p>1. By those [angels] lined up in rows</p> <p>2. And those who drive [the clouds]</p> <p>3. And those who recite the message,¹²⁰²</p> <p>4. Indeed, your God is One,</p> <p>5. Lord of the heavens and the earth and that between them and Lord of the sunrises.¹²⁰³</p> <p>6. Indeed, We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment of stars</p> <p>7. And as protection against every rebellious devil</p> <p>8. [So] they may not listen to the exalted assembly [of angels] and are pelted from every side,¹²⁰⁴</p> <p>9. Repelled; and for them is a constant punishment,</p> <p>10. Except one who snatches [some words] by theft, but they are pursued by a burning flame, piercing [in brightness].</p> <p>11. Then inquire of them, [O Muhammad], “Are they a stronger [or more difficult] creation or those [others] We have created?” Indeed, We created them [i.e., men] from sticky clay.</p> <p>12. But you wonder, while they mock,</p> | <p>13. And when they are reminded, they remember not.</p> <p>14. And when they see a sign, they ridicule</p> <p>15. And say, “This is not but obvious magic.</p> <p>16. When we have died and become dust and bones, are we indeed to be resurrected?</p> <p>17. And our forefathers [as well]?”</p> <p>18. Say, “Yes, and you will be [rendered] contemptible.”</p> <p>19. It will be only one shout, and at once they will be observing.</p> <p>20. They will say, “O woe to us! This is the Day of Recompense.”</p> <p>21. [They will be told], “This is the Day of Judgement which you used to deny.”</p> <p>22. [The angels will be ordered], “Gather those who committed wrong, their kinds,¹²⁰⁵ and what they used to worship</p> <p>23. Other than God, and guide them to the path of Hellfire</p> <p>24. And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned.”</p> <p>25. [They will be asked], “What is [wrong] with you? Why do you not help each other?”</p> <p>26. But they, that Day, are in surrender.</p> |
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¹²⁰¹ *As-Sāffāt*: Those Lined Up.

¹²⁰² To the prophets or among themselves. God swears by these three kinds of angels to the fact mentioned in the following verse.

¹²⁰³ i.e., each point or place of sunrise.

¹²⁰⁴ By flaming meteors.

¹²⁰⁵ Those similar to them in evil deeds. Another possible meaning is “their wives.”

27. And they will approach one another asking [i.e., blaming] each other.
28. They will say, "Indeed, you used to come at us from the right."¹²⁰⁶
29. They [i.e., the oppressors] will say, "Rather, you [yourselves] were not believers,
30. And we had over you no authority, but you were a transgressing people.
31. So the word [i.e., decree] of our Lord has come into effect upon us; indeed, we will taste [punishment].
32. And we led you to deviation; indeed, we were deviators."
33. So indeed they, that Day, will be sharing in the punishment.
34. Indeed, that is how We deal with the criminals.
35. Indeed they, when it was said to them, "There is no deity but God," were arrogant
36. And were saying, "Are we to leave our gods for a mad poet?"
37. Rather, he [i.e., the Prophet] has come with the truth and confirmed the [previous] messengers.
38. Indeed, you [disbelievers] will be tasters of the painful punishment,
39. And you will not be recompensed except for what you used to do -
40. But not the chosen servants of God.
41. Those will have a provision determined -
42. Fruits;¹²⁰⁷ and they will be honoured
43. In gardens of pleasure
44. On thrones facing one another.
45. There will be circulated among them a cup [of wine] from a flowing spring,
46. White and delicious to the drinkers;
47. No bad effect is there in it, nor from it will they be intoxicated.
48. And with them will be women limiting [their] glances,¹²⁰⁸ with large, [beautiful] eyes,
49. As if they were [delicate] eggs, well-protected.
50. And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other.
51. A speaker among them will say, "Indeed, I had a companion [on earth]
52. Who would say, 'Are you indeed of those who believe
53. That when we have died and become dust and bones, we will indeed be recompensed?' "
54. He will say,¹²⁰⁹ "Would you [care to] look?"
55. And he will look and see him¹²¹⁰ in the midst of the Hellfire.

¹²⁰⁶ i.e., from our position of strength, oppressing us. Or from where we would have grasped the truth, preventing us.

¹²⁰⁷ Meaning everything delicious.

¹²⁰⁸ i.e., chaste and modest, looking only at their mates.

¹²⁰⁹ To his companions in Paradise.

56. He will say, “By God, you almost ruined me.
57. If not for the favor of my Lord, I would have been of those brought in [to Hell].
58. Then, are we not to die
59. Except for our first death, and we will not be punished?”
60. Indeed, this is the great attainment.
61. For the like of this let the workers [on earth] work.
62. Is that [i.e., Paradise] a better accommodation or the tree of zaqqūm?
63. Indeed, We have made it a torment for the wrongdoers.
64. Indeed, it is a tree issuing from the bottom of the Hellfire,
65. Its emerging fruit as if it was heads of the devils.
66. And indeed, they will eat from it and fill with it their bellies.
67. Then indeed, they will have after it a mixture of scalding water.
68. Then indeed, their return will be to the Hellfire.
69. Indeed they found their fathers astray.
70. So they hastened [to follow] in their footsteps.
71. And there had already strayed before them most of the former peoples,
72. And We had already sent among them warners.
73. Then look how was the end of those who were warned -
74. But not the chosen servants of God.
75. And Noah had certainly called Us, and [We are] the best of responders.
76. And We saved him and his family from the great affliction.
77. And We made his descendants those remaining [on the earth]
78. And left for him [favorable mention] among later generations:
79. “Peace upon Noah among the worlds.”
80. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.
81. Indeed, he was of Our believing servants.
82. Then We drowned the others [i.e., disbelievers].
83. And indeed, among his kind was Abraham,
84. When he came to his Lord with a sound heart
85. [And] when he said to his father and his people, “What do you worship?
86. Is it falsehood [as] gods other than God you desire?

¹²¹⁰ The companion who had tried to dissuade him from belief on earth.

87. Then what is your thought about the Lord of the worlds?"
88. And he cast a look at the stars
89. And said, "Indeed, I am [about to be] ill."
90. So they turned away from him, departing.
91. Then he turned to their gods and said, "Do you not eat?"¹²¹¹
92. What is [wrong] with you that you do not speak?"
93. And he turned upon them a blow with [his] right hand.
94. Then they [i.e., the people] came toward him, hastening.
95. He said, "Do you worship that which you [yourselves] carve,
96. While God created you and that which you do?"
97. They said, "Construct for him a structure [i.e., furnace] and throw him into the burning fire."
98. And they intended for him a plan, [i.e., harm] but We made them the most debased.
99. And [then] he said, "Indeed, I will go to [where I am ordered by] my Lord; He will guide me.
100. My Lord, grant me [a child] from among the righteous."
101. So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy.
102. And when he reached with him [the age of] exertion,¹²¹² he said, "O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think." He said, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if God wills, of the steadfast."
103. And when they had both submitted¹²¹³ and he put him down upon his forehead,
104. We called to him, "O Abraham,
105. You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.
106. Indeed, this was the clear trial.
107. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice,¹²¹⁴
108. And We left for him [favorable mention] among later generations:
109. "Peace upon Abraham."
110. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.
111. Indeed, he was of Our believing servants.
112. And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous.¹²¹⁵

¹²¹¹ Consume the offerings placed before them.

¹²¹² i.e., the ability to work and be of assistance.

¹²¹³ To the command of God.

¹²¹⁴ God sent a huge ram to be sacrificed in place of Ishmael.

¹²¹⁵ This verifies that the firstborn son who was to be sacrificed was Ishmael and not Isaac, as claimed by the Jews and Christians.

113. And We blessed him and Isaac. But among their descendants is the doer of good and the clearly unjust to himself [i.e., sinner].
114. And We did certainly confer favor upon Moses and Aaron.
115. And We saved them and their people from the great affliction,
116. And We supported them so it was they who overcame.
117. And We gave them the explicit Scripture [i.e., the Torah],
118. And We guided them on the straight path.
119. And We left for them [favorable mention] among later generations:
120. "Peace upon Moses and Aaron."
121. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.
122. Indeed, they were of Our believing servants.
123. And indeed, Elias was from among the messengers,
124. When he said to his people, "Will you not fear God?"
125. Do you call upon Ba¹²¹⁶ and leave the best of creators -
126. God, your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers?"
127. And they denied him, so indeed, they will be brought [for punishment],
128. Except the chosen servants of God.
129. And We left for him [favorable mention] among later generations:
130. "Peace upon Elias."¹²¹⁷
131. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.
132. Indeed, he was of Our believing servants.
133. And indeed, Lot was among the messengers.
134. [So mention] when We saved him and his family, all,
135. Except an old woman [i.e., his wife] among those who remained [with the evildoers].
136. Then We destroyed the others.
137. And indeed, you pass by them in the morning
138. And at night. Then will you not use reason?
139. And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers.
140. [Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship.
141. And he drew lots¹²¹⁸ and was among the losers.

¹²¹⁶ The name of a great idol worshipped by the people and said to mean "lord."

¹²¹⁷ *Ilyāseen* is said by some commentators to be a plural form, meaning "Elias and those who followed him."

¹²¹⁸ To determine who would be cast overboard in order to save the other passengers. Having

142. Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy.¹²¹⁹
143. And had he not been of those who exalt God,
144. He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected.¹²²⁰
145. But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill.
146. And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine.¹²²¹
147. And We sent him¹²²² to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more.
148. And they believed, so We gave them enjoyment [of life] for a time.
149. So inquire of them, [O Muhammad], “Does your Lord have daughters while they have sons?”¹²²³
150. Or did We create the angels as females while they were witnesses?”
151. Unquestionably, it is out of their [invented] falsehood that they say,
152. “God has begotten,” and indeed, they are liars.
153. Has He chosen daughters over sons?
154. What is [wrong] with you? How do you make judgement?
155. Then will you not be reminded?
156. Or do you have a clear authority?
157. Then produce your scripture, if you should be truthful.
158. And they have made [i.e., claimed] between Him and the jinn a lineage, but the jinn have already known that they [who made such claims] will be brought [to punishment].
159. Exalted is God above what they describe,
160. Except the chosen servants of God [who do not share in that sin].
161. So indeed, you [disbelievers] and whatever you worship,
162. You cannot tempt [anyone] away from Him
163. Except he who is to [enter and] burn in the Hellfire.¹²²⁴
164. [The angels say],¹²²⁵ “There is not among us any except that he has a known position.¹²²⁶
165. And indeed, we are those who line up [for prayer].
166. And indeed, we are those who exalt God.”

been overloaded, the ship was on the verge of sinking.

¹²¹⁹ For having given up hope on his people prematurely and having left them without permission from God.

¹²²⁰ Meaning that the belly of the fish would have become his grave.

¹²²¹ Which is known to give cooling shade and to be a repellent of flies.

¹²²² i.e., returned him thereafter.

¹²²³ The people of Makkah claimed that the angels were daughters of God, yet they preferred sons for themselves.

¹²²⁴ Due to his disbelief and evil deeds.

¹²²⁵ Refuting what the disbelievers had said about them.

¹²²⁶ For worship. Or “an assigned task” to perform.

167. And indeed, they [i.e., the disbelievers] used to say,¹²²⁷
168. “If we had a message from [those of] the former peoples,
169. We would have been the chosen servants of God.”
170. But they disbelieved in it,¹²²⁸ so they are going to know.
171. And Our word [i.e., decree] has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers,
172. [That] indeed, they would be those given victory
173. And [that] indeed, Our soldiers [i.e., the believers] will be those who overcome.¹²²⁹
174. So, [O Muhammad], leave them for a time.
175. And see [what will befall] them, for they are going to see.
176. Then for Our punishment are they impatient?
177. But when it descends in their territory, then evil is the morning of those who were warned.
178. And leave them for a time.
179. And see, for they are going to see.
180. Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe.
181. And peace upon the messengers.
182. And praise to God, Lord of the worlds.

¹²²⁷ Before the revelation of the Qurʾān.

¹²²⁸ i.e., in their own message, the Qurʾān.

¹²²⁹ If not in this world, then definitely in the Hereafter.