
Sūrah 39: az-Zumar

Period of Revelation

In verse 10 (wa ardullah-i-wasi atun: and God's earth is spacious) there is abundant evidence that this Sūrah was sent down before the migration to Abassinyah. Some hadith provide the explanation that this verse was sent down in respect of Ja'far bin Abi Talib and his companions when they made up their mind to emigrate to Abassinyah.

Theme and Subject Matter

The entire Sūrah is a most eloquent and effective address which was given some time before the emigration to Abassinyah, in an environment filled with tyranny and persecution, ill-will and antagonism, at Makkah. It is a sermon whose addressees mainly are the unbelieving Quraysh, although here and there the believers also have been addressed. In it the real aim of the invitation of Muhammad had been enunciated, which is this: Man should adopt God's servitude sincerely, and should not pollute his worship with the service of any other. Presenting this cardinal principle in different ways over and over again, the truth of Tawhid (Oneness of God) and the excellent results of accepting it, and the falsehood of shirk and the evil consequences of following it, have been explained in a most forceful way, and the people exhorted to give up their wrong way of life and return to the mercy of their Lord. In this very connection, the believers have been instructed, as if to say: "If a place has become narrow for the worship and service of God, His earth is vast: you may emigrate to some other place in order to save your faith: God will reward you for your patience." On the other hand, the Prophet has been encouraged, so as to say: "Tell the disbelievers plainly that they may do whatever they like, but their persecutions and tyrannies will never deter you from the way of Islām; that they may go on doing their worst to obstruct your way, but you will continue to perform your mission in spite of the adverse conditions and circumstances."

Sūrah 39: az-Zumar¹²⁴⁹

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

1. The revelation of the Book [i.e., the Qurʾān] is from God, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
2. Indeed, We have sent down to you the Book, [O Muhammad], in truth. So worship God, [being] sincere to Him in religion.
3. Unquestionably, for God is the pure religion.¹²⁵⁰ And those who take protectors besides Him [say], “We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to God in position.” Indeed, God will judge between them concerning that over which they differ. Indeed, God does not guide he who is a liar and [confirmed] disbeliever.
4. If God had intended to take a son, He could have chosen from what He creates whatever He willed. Exalted is He; He is God, the One, the Prevailing.
5. He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver.
6. He created you from one soul. Then He made from it its mate, and He produced for you from the grazing livestock eight mates.¹²⁵¹ He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, within three dark-nesses.¹²⁵² That is God, your Lord; to Him belongs dominion. There is no deity except Him, so how are you averted?
7. If you disbelieve - indeed, God is Free from need of you. And He does not approve for His servants disbelief. And if you are grateful, He approves [i.e., likes] it for you; and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you about what you used to do. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.
8. And when adversity touches man, he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him [alone]; then when He bestows on him a favor from Himself, he forgets Him whom he called upon before,¹²⁵³ and he attributes to God equals to mislead [people] from His way. Say, “Enjoy your disbelief for a little; indeed, you are of the companions of the Fire.”
9. Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.
10. Say,¹²⁵⁴ “O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of God is spacious. Indeed, the

¹²⁴⁹ *Az-Zumar*: The Groups.

¹²⁵⁰ i.e., acceptable to God is that none be associated with Him in worship and obedience.

¹²⁵¹ See 6:143-144.

¹²⁵² i.e., the belly, the womb, and the amniotic membrane.

¹²⁵³ Or “that for which he called upon Him before.”

¹²⁵⁴ The Prophet is instructed to say on behalf of God to His believing servants.

- patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”
11. Say, [O Muhammad], “Indeed, I have been commanded to worship God, [being] sincere to Him in religion.
12. And I have been commanded to be the first [among you] of the Muslims.”
13. Say, “Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.”
14. Say, “God [alone] do I worship, sincere to Him in my religion,
15. So worship what you will besides Him.” Say, “Indeed, the losers are the ones who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Unquestionably, that is the manifest loss.”
16. They will have canopies [i.e., layers] of fire above them and below them, canopies. By that God threatens [i.e., warms] His servants. O My servants, then fear Me.
17. But those who have avoided tāghūt,¹²⁵⁵ lest they worship it, and turned back to God - for them are good tidings. So give good tidings to My servants
18. Who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones God has guided, and those are people of understanding.
19. Then, is one who has deserved the decree of punishment [to be guided]? Then, can you save one who is in the Fire?
20. But those who have feared their Lord - for them are chambers,¹²⁵⁶ above them chambers built high, beneath which rivers flow. [This is] the promise of God. God does not fail in [His] promise.
21. Do you not see that God sends down rain from the sky and makes it flow as springs [and rivers] in the earth; then He produces thereby crops of varying colors; then they dry and you see them [scattered] debris. Indeed in that is a reminder for those of understanding.
22. So is one whose breast God has expanded to [accept] Islām and he is upon [i.e., guided by] a light from his Lord [like one whose heart rejects it]? Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God. Those are in manifest error.
23. God has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance [i.e., mention] of God. That is the guidance of God by which He guides whom He wills. And one whom God leaves astray - for him there is no guide.
24. Then is he who will shield with his face¹²⁵⁷ the worst of the punishment on the Day of Resurrection [like one secure from it]? And it will be said to the wrongdoers, “Taste what you used to earn.”

¹²⁵⁶ i.e., elevated rooms, dwellings or palaces.

¹²⁵⁷ Rather than his hands, which will be chained to his neck.

¹²⁵⁵ i.e., Satan or any false object of worship.

25. Those before them denied, and punishment came upon them from where they did not perceive.
26. So God made them taste disgrace in worldly life. But the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.
27. And We have certainly presented for the people in this Qur'an from every [kind of] example - that they might remember.
28. [It is] an Arabic Qur'an, without any deviance¹²⁵⁸ that they might become righteous.¹²⁵⁹
29. God presents an example: a man [i.e., slave] owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to God! But most of them do not know.
30. Indeed, you are to die, and indeed, they are to die.
31. Then indeed you, on the Day of Resurrection, before your Lord, will dispute.
32. So who is more unjust than one who lies about God and denies the truth when it has come to him? Is there not in Hell a residence for the disbelievers?
33. And the one who has brought the truth [i.e., the Prophet] and [they who] believed in it - those are the righteous.
34. They will have whatever they desire with their Lord. That is the reward of the doers of good -
35. That God may remove from them the worst of what they did and reward them their due for the best of what they used to do.
36. Is not God sufficient for His Servant [i.e., Prophet Muhammad]? And [yet], they threaten you with those [they worship] other than Him. And whoever God leaves astray - for him there is no guide.
37. And whoever God guides - for him there is no misleader. Is not God Exalted in Might and Owner of Retribution?
38. And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they would surely say, "God." Say, "Then have you considered¹²⁶⁰ what you invoke besides God? If God intended me harm, are they removers of His harm; or if He intended me mercy, are they withholders of His mercy?" Say, "Sufficient for me is God; upon Him [alone] rely the [wise] reliers."
39. Say, "O my people, work according to your position, [for] indeed, I am working; and you are going to know
40. To whom will come a torment disgracing him and on whom will descend an enduring punishment."
41. Indeed, We sent down to you the Book for the people in truth. So whoever is guided - it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment. And you are not a manager [i.e., authority] over them.
42. God takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He

¹²⁵⁸ From the truth.

¹²⁵⁹ Through consciousness of God.

¹²⁶⁰ i.e., "Tell me about..."

- takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.
43. Or have they taken other than God as intercessors? Say, “Even though they do not possess [power over] anything, nor do they reason?”
44. Say, “To God belongs [the right to allow] intercession entirely. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Then to Him you will be returned.”
45. And when God is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink with aversion, but when those [worshipped] other than Him are mentioned, immediately they rejoice.
46. Say, “O God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, You will judge between your servants concerning that over which they used to differ.”
47. And if those who did wrong had all that is in the earth entirely and the like of it with it, they would [attempt to] ransom themselves thereby from the worst of the punishment on the Day of Resurrection. And there will appear to them from God that which they had not taken into account.¹²⁶¹
48. And there will appear to them the evils they had earned, and they will be enveloped by what they used to ridicule.
49. And when adversity touches man, he calls upon Us; then when We bestow on him a favor from Us, he says, “I have only been given it because of [my] knowledge.” Rather, it is a trial, but most of them do not know.
50. Those before them had already said it, but they were not availed by what they used to earn.
51. And the evil consequences of what they earned struck them. And those who have wronged of these [people] will be struck [i.e., afflicted] by the evil consequences of what they earned; and they will not cause failure.¹²⁶²
52. Do they not know that God extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]? Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe.
53. Say, “O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God forgives all sins.¹²⁶³ Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”
54. And return [in repentance] to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you; then you will not be helped.
55. And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord [i.e., the Qur’ān] before the punishment comes upon you suddenly while you do not perceive,
56. Lest a soul should say,¹²⁶⁴ “Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to God and that I was among the mockers.”

¹²⁶¹ Of His anger and punishment.

¹²⁶² i.e., prevent God from what He wills or escape from the punishment.

¹²⁶³ For those who repent and correct themselves.

¹²⁶⁴ On the Day of Resurrection.

57. Or [lest] it say, "If only God had guided me, I would have been among the righteous."
58. Or [lest] it say when it sees the punishment, "If only I had another turn¹²⁶⁵ so I could be among the doers of good."
59. But yes, there had come to you My verses, but you denied them and were arrogant, and you were among the disbelievers.
60. And on the Day of Resurrection you will see those who lied about God [with] their faces blackened. Is there not in Hell a residence for the arrogant?
61. And God will save those who feared Him by their attainment;¹²⁶⁶ no evil will touch them, nor will they grieve.
62. God is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs.
63. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. And they who disbelieve in the verses of God - it is those who are the losers.
64. Say, [O Muhammad], "Is it other than God that you order me to worship, O ignorant ones?"
65. And it was already revealed to you and to those before you that if you should associate [anything] with God, your work would surely become worthless, and you would surely be among the losers."
66. Rather, worship [only] God and be among the grateful.
67. They have not appraised God with true appraisal,¹²⁶⁷ while the earth entirely will be [within] His grip¹²⁶⁸ on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand.¹²⁶⁹ Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.
68. And the Horn will be blown, and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall dead except whom God wills. Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on.
69. And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the record [of deeds] will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and it will be judged between them in truth, and they will not be wronged.
70. And every soul will be fully compensated [for] what it did; and He is most knowing¹²⁷⁰ of what they do.
71. And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups until, when they reach it, its gates are opened and its keepers will say, "Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the verses of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say, "Yes, but the word [i.e., decree] of punishment has come into effect upon the disbelievers."

¹²⁶⁵ At worldly life.

¹²⁶⁶ i.e., their success in the trials of worldly life and attainment of Paradise.

¹²⁶⁷ i.e., appreciation of His attributes.

¹²⁶⁸ Literally, "no more than a handful of His."

¹²⁶⁹ See footnote to 2:19.

¹²⁷⁰ With no need for any record or witnesses, which are but means to establish proof to the soul itself in addition to its own knowledge of what it has done.

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72. [To them] it will be said, “Enter the gates of Hell to abide eternally therein, and wretched is the residence of the arrogant.”
73. But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened and its keepers say, “Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein,” [they will enter].¹²⁷¹
74. And they will say, “Praise to God, who has fulfilled for us His promise and made us inherit the earth [so] we may settle in Paradise wherever we will. And excellent is the reward of [righteous] workers.”
75. And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne, exalting [God] with praise of their Lord. And it will be judged between them in truth, and it will be said, “[All] praise to God, Lord of the worlds.”

¹²⁷¹ In such honour and joy that is beyond description – thus, the omission of this conclusion in the Arabic text.