

## Sūrah 47: Muhammad

### Period of Revelation

The contents of this Sūrah testify that it was sent down after the Hijrah at Madinah at the time when the fighting had been enjoined, though active fighting had not yet been undertaken.

### Historical Background

The conditions at the time when this Sūrah was sent down were such that the Muslims were being made the target of persecution and tyranny in Makkah in particular and in Arabia in general, and life had become miserable for them. Although the Muslims had emigrated to the haven of Madinah from every side, the disbelieving Quraysh were not prepared to leave them alone and let them live in peace even there. Thus, the small settlement of Madinah was hemmed in by the enemy, who was bent upon exterminating it completely. The only alternative left with the Muslims were that either they should surrender to the forces of ignorance, giving up their mission of preaching the true Faith, or even following it in their private lives, or should rise to wage a war at the cost of their lives to settle finally and for ever whether Islām would stay in Arabia or the creed of ignorance. On this occasion God showed the Muslims the same way of resolution and will, which is the only way for the true believers. He first permitted them to fight in Sūrah al-Hajj: 39 and then enjoined fighting in Sūrah al-Baqarah: 190. But at that time everyone knew fully well what it meant to wage a war in those conditions. There were only a handful of Muslims in Madinah, who could not muster even a thousand soldiers; yet they were being urged to take up the sword and clash against the pagan forces of the whole of Arabia. Then the kind of the weapons needed to equip its soldiers for war could hardly be afforded by the town in which hundreds of emigrants were still homeless and unsettled even by resort to starving its members at a time when it had been boycotted economically by the Arabs on all sides.

### Theme and Subject Matter

Such were the conditions when this Sūrah was revealed. Its theme is to prepare the believers for war and to give them preliminary instructions in this regard. That is why it has also been entitled al-Qital. It deals with the following topics:

At the outset it is said that of the two groups confronting each other at this time, one has refused to accept the Truth and has become an obstruction for others on the way of God, while the other group has accepted the Truth which had been sent down by God to His servant, Muhammad. Now, God's final decision is that He has rendered fruitless and vain all the works of the former group and set right the condition and affairs of the latter group.

After this, the Muslims have been given the initial war instructions and they have been reassured of God's help and guidance: they have been given hope for the best rewards on offering sacrifices in the cause of God and they have been assured that their struggle in the cause of the Truth will not go to waste, but they will be abundantly rewarded both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Furthermore, about the disbelievers it has been said that they are deprived of God's support and guidance: none of their designs will succeed in their conflict with the believers, and they will meet a most evil fate both in this world and in the Hereafter. They thought they had achieved a great success by driving the Prophet of God out of Makkah, but in fact by this they had hastened their own doom.

After this, the discourse turns to the hypocrites, who were posing to be sincere Muslims before the command to fight was sent down, but were confounded when this command actually came down, and began to conspire with the disbelievers in order to save themselves from the hazards of war. They have been plainly warned to the effect that no act and deed is acceptable to God of those who adopt hypocrisy with regard to

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Him and His Prophet. There, the basic issue against which all those who profess the Faith are being tried is whether one is on the side of the Truth or Falsehood, whether one's sympathies are with Islām and the Muslims or with disbelief and the disbelievers, whether one keeps one's own self and interests dearer or the Truth which one professes to believe in and follow. One who fails in this test is not at all a believer; his Prayer and his Fasting and his discharging of the Zakāh deserve no reward from God.

Then the Muslims have been exhorted not to lose heart for being small in numbers and ill equipped as against the great strength of the disbelievers: they should not show weakness by offering peace to them, which might still further embolden them against Islām and the Muslims, but they should come out with trust in God and clash with the mighty forces of disbelief. God is with the Muslims: they alone shall triumph; and the might of disbelief will be humbled and vanquished.

In conclusion, the Muslims have been invited to spend their wealth in the cause of God. Although at that time they were economically very weak, the problem that they confronted was the very survival of Islām and the Muslims. The importance and delicacy of the problem demanded that the Muslims should not only risk their lives for safeguarding themselves and their Faith from the dominance of disbelief and for exalting God's Religion but should also expend their economic resources as far as possible in the preparations for war. Therefore, they were clearly warned to the effect: Anyone who adopted a niggardly attitude at the time, would not, in fact, harm God at all, but would result in his own destruction, for God does not stand in need of help from men. If one group of men shirked offering sacrifices in the cause of His Religion, God would remove them and bring another group in its place.

**Sūrah 47: Muhammad**<sup>1388</sup>

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

1. Those who disbelieve and avert [people] from the way of God - He will waste their deeds.<sup>1389</sup>
2. And those who believe and do righteous deeds and believe in what has been sent down upon Muhammad - and it is the truth from their Lord - He will remove from them their misdeeds and amend their condition.
3. That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood, and those who believe follow the truth from their Lord. Thus does God present to the people their comparisons.<sup>1390</sup>
4. So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds,<sup>1391</sup> and either [confer] favor<sup>1392</sup> afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens.<sup>1393</sup> That [is the command]. And if God had willed, He could have taken vengeance upon them [Himself], but [He ordered armed struggle] to test some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the cause of God - never will He waste their deeds.
5. He will guide them and amend their condition
6. And admit them to Paradise, which He has made known to them.
7. O you who have believed, if you support God, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.
8. But those who disbelieve - for them is misery, and He will waste their deeds.
9. That is because they disliked what God revealed, so He rendered worthless their deeds.
10. Have they not traveled through the land and seen how was the end of those before them? God destroyed [everything] over them,<sup>1394</sup> and for the disbelievers is something comparable.
11. That is because God is the protector of those who have believed and because the disbelievers have no protector.
12. Indeed, God will admit those who have believed and done righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow, but those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as grazing livestock eat, and the Fire will be a residence for them.
13. And how many a city was stronger than your city [i.e., Makkah] which drove you out? We destroyed them; and there was no helper for them.
14. So is he who is on clear evidence from his Lord like him to whom the evil of his work has been made attractive and they follow their [own] desires?

<sup>1388</sup> *Muhammad*: (The Prophet) Muhammad.

<sup>1389</sup> i.e., cause them to be lost or make them worthless, earning no reward.

<sup>1390</sup> So that they may know the results of their choice.

<sup>1391</sup> i.e., take those remaining as captives.

<sup>1392</sup> i.e., release them without ransom.

<sup>1393</sup> i.e., its armour, machinery, etc., meaning "until the war is over."

<sup>1394</sup> i.e., destroyed them and all they owned.

15. Is the description of Paradise, which the righteous are promised, wherein are rivers of water unaltered,<sup>1395</sup> rivers of milk the taste of which never changes, rivers of wine delicious to those who drink, and rivers of purified honey, in which they will have from all [kinds of] fruits and forgiveness from their Lord, like [that of] those who abide eternally in the Fire and are given to drink scalding water that will sever their intestines?
16. And among them, [O Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge,<sup>1396</sup> “What has he said just now?” Those are the ones of whom God has sealed over their hearts and who have followed their [own] desires.
17. And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.<sup>1397</sup>
18. Then do they await except that the Hour should come upon them unexpectedly? But already there have come [some of] its indications. Then how [i.e., what good] to them, when it has come, will be their remembrance?
19. So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except God and ask forgiveness for your sin<sup>1398</sup> and for the believing men and believing women. And God knows of your movement and your resting place.
20. Those who believe say, “Why has a sūrah<sup>1399</sup> not been sent down?” But when a precise sūrah is revealed and fighting is mentioned therein, you see those in whose hearts is disease [i.e., hypocrisy] looking at you with a look of one overcome by death. And more appropriate for them<sup>1400</sup> [would have been]
21. Obedience and good words. And when the matter [of fighting] was determined, if they had been true to God, it would have been better for them.
22. So would you perhaps, if you turned away,<sup>1401</sup> cause corruption on earth and sever your [ties of] relationship?
23. Those [who do so] are the ones that God has cursed, so He deafened them and blinded their vision.
24. Then do they not reflect upon the Qur’ān, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?
25. Indeed, those who reverted back [to disbelief] after guidance had become clear to them - Satan enticed them and prolonged hope for them.
26. That is because they said to those who disliked what God sent down,<sup>1402</sup> “We will obey you in part of the matter.” And God knows what they conceal.

<sup>1395</sup> In taste or smell, neither stagnant nor polluted.

<sup>1396</sup> From among the Prophet’s companions.

<sup>1397</sup> *Tāqwa*, meaning piety, consciousness and fear of God, and care to avoid His displeasure.

<sup>1398</sup> See footnote to 40:55.

<sup>1399</sup> i.e., one in which permission is given the believers to fight their enemies.

<sup>1400</sup> The words “*awlā labumī*” can also be interpreted as “woe to them!” In that case, the following verse would begin, “[Better for them would have been] obedience and good words.”

<sup>1401</sup> From Islām or from *jihād* (struggling in the cause of God).

<sup>1402</sup> i.e., the Jews of Madinah.

27. Then how [will it be] when the angels take them in death, striking their faces and their backs?      fear God, He will give you your rewards and not ask you for your properties.
28. That is because they followed what angered God and disliked [what earns] His pleasure, so He rendered worthless their deeds.      37. If He should ask you for them and press you, you would withhold, and He would expose your hatred [i.e., unwillingness].
29. Or do those in whose hearts is disease think that God would never expose their [feelings of] hatred?      38. Here you are - those invited to spend in the cause of God - but among you are those who withhold [out of greed]. And whoever withholds only withholds [benefit] from himself; and God is the Free of need, while you are the needy. And if you turn away [i.e., refuse], He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you.
30. And if We willed, We could show them to you, and you would know them by their mark; but you will surely know them by the tone of [their] speech. And God knows your deeds.
31. And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you [for the cause of God] and the patient, and We will test your affairs.
32. Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of God and opposed the Messenger after guidance had become clear to them - never will they harm God at all, and He will render worthless their deeds.
33. O you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and do not invalidate your deeds.
34. Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of God and then died while they were disbelievers - never will God forgive them.
35. So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and God is with you and will never deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds.
36. [This] worldly life is only amusement and diversion. And if you believe and