

Sūrah 57: al-Hadeed

Period of Revelation

This is unanimously a Madani Sūrah, and a study of its subject matter shows that it was probably sent down some time during the interval between the Battle of Uhud and the Truce of Hudaibiyah. This was the time when the tiny Islāmic State of Madinah had been hemmed in by the disbelievers and the handful of the ill equipped Muslims were entrenched against the combined power of entire Arabia. In this state Islām not only stood in need of the sacrifice of Life from its followers, but it also needed monetary help and assistance. In this Sūrah a forceful appeal has been made for the same. This view is further strengthened by verse 10 in which God has addressed the believers to the effect: “Those of you who would spend and fight after the victory can never be equal to those who have spent and fought before the victory.” And the same is supported by the traditions that Ibn Marduyah has related on the authority of Anas. In respect of the verse ‘Alam ya’n-i lilladhina aamanu an takhsha’a qulubu-hum li-dhikrillah-i,’ he says that 17 years after the commencement of the revelation of the Qur’ān this verse was sent down to arouse the believers to action. Reckoned thus the period of the revelation of this Sūrah falls between the 4th and the 5th year after the Hijra (migration).

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Sūrah is to exhort the Muslims to spend in the cause of God. At the most critical juncture of the history of Islām when it was engaged in a life and death struggle against Arab paganism, this Sūrah was revealed to persuade the Muslim’s to make monetary sacrifices in particular, and to make them realize that Islām did not merely consist in verbal affirmation and some outward practices but its essence and spirit is sincerity towards God and His Religion. The faith of the one who was devoid of this spirit and who regarded his own self and wealth as dearer to himself than God and His Religion, was hollow and therefore of little worth in the sight of God. For this object, first the attributes of God Almighty have been mentioned so that the listeners may fully realize as to Who is addressing them. Then, the following themes have been expressed in sequence:

1. The inevitable demand of the Faith is that one should not avoid spending one’s wealth for the sake of God. This would not only be contrary to the Faith but also wrong realistically. For the wealth indeed belongs to God, on which man has been given proprietary rights only as His vicegerent. Yesterday this wealth was in other people’s possession; today it is with one particular man, and tomorrow it will pass into someone else’s hand. Ultimately, it will go back to God, Who is the inheritor of everything in the universe. The only amount of wealth that will be of any use to a man, is that amount which he spends in the cause of God during the period it is in his possession.
2. Although making sacrifices for the sake of God is commendable in any case, the true worth of these sacrifices is determined by the nature of the occasion. There is an occasion when the power of paganism is overwhelming and there is a danger that it might subdue and overcome Islām completely; there is another occasion when Islām is in a stronger position in its struggle against un-Islām and the believers are attaining victories. Both these states are not equal as regards their respective importance. Therefore, the sacrifices that are made in these different states would also not be equal. Those who sacrifice their lives and expend their wealth to further promote the cause of Islām when it is already strong cannot attain to the rank of those who struggled with their lives and their wealth to promote and uphold the cause of Islām when it was weak.
3. Whatever is spent for the cause of the Truth is a loan on God, and God will not only return it increasing it manifold but will also give from Himself the best reward for it.
4. In the Hereafter the Light shall be bestowed only on those believers who would have spent their wealth in the cause of God. As for the hypocrites who watched and served only their own interests in the world, and who least bothered whether the Truth or falsehood prevailed will be segregated

from the believers in the Hereafter although they might have lived in close association with them in the world. They will be deprived of the Light, and they will be counted among the disbelievers.

5. The Muslims should not behave like those followers of the earlier Books, whose lives have been spent in the worship of the world and whose hearts have become hardened due to negligence with the passage of time. He cannot be a believer whose heart does not melt at the remembrance of God and does not bow to the Truth sent down by Him.
6. The sincere upholders of the Truth and the true witnesses of the Faith in the sight of God are only those believers who spend their wealth in His way sincerely, without any desire of show.
7. The life of this world is only a short lived spring and a means of pride and show. Its sports and pastimes, its adornments and decorations, its pride of place, its wealth and possessions, for which the people try to oppose with one another, are transient. Its likeness is of the crop which flourishes and blooms, then turns pale and then finally is reduced to chaff. The everlasting life is the life hereafter when results of great consequence will be announced. Therefore, if one has to compete with another for something, one should strive for Paradise.
8. Whatever good man meets with and whatever hardship he suffers in the world, are preordained by God. A true believer is he who does not lose heart in affliction and is not puffed up with pride in good times. It is the character of a hypocrite and disbeliever that he is puffed up with pride when God favors him with His blessings, behaved boastfully and shows stinginess when called upon to spend in the cause of the same God Who blessed him, and also counsels others to be stingy like himself.
9. God sent His Messengers with clear signs and the Book and the Law of Justice so that the people may adhere to justice; besides, He sent down iron also so that power may be used to establish the Truth and vanquish falsehood. Thus, God likes to see as to who from among the people would rise to support and succor His true Religion even at the risk of their lives. These opportunities God has created for man's own advantage and development; otherwise God does not stand in need of others for His works.
10. Prophets came from God in the past, and by their preaching some people adopted the Right Path, but most of them persisted in wickedness. Then the Prophet Jesus came, whose teachings brought about many moral improvements in the lives of the people, but his community invented monasticism. Now God has sent the Prophet Muhammad. Those who affirm faith in him and pass their life fearing God's accountability, will be given by God a double share of His mercy and He will bless them with the Light by which they will see and walk the straight path among the crooked paths met with at every step in the life of this world. Although the followers of the earlier revelation regard themselves as the monopolists of God's bounties, the fact remains that God Himself controls His bounties He may bless with these whomever He pleases.

Sūrah 57: al-Hadeed¹⁵¹¹

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

1. Whatever is in the heavens and earth exalts God,¹⁵¹² and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
2. His is the dominion of the heavens and earth. He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent.
3. He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant¹⁵¹³ and the Intimate,¹⁵¹⁴ and He is, of all things, Knowing.
4. It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne.¹⁵¹⁵ He knows what penetrates into the earth and what emerges from it and what descends from the heaven and what ascends therein; and He is with you¹⁵¹⁶ wherever you are. And God, of what you do, is Seeing.
5. His is the dominion of the heavens and earth. And to God are returned [all] matters.
6. He causes the night to enter the day and causes the day to enter the night, and He is Knowing of that within the breasts.
7. Believe in God and His Messenger and spend out of that in which He has made you successors. For those who have believed among you and spent,¹⁵¹⁷ there will be a great reward.
8. And why do you not believe in God while the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord and He has taken your covenant, if you should [truly] be believers?
9. It is He who sends down upon His Servant [Muhammad] verses of clear evidence that He may bring you out from darkneses into the light. And indeed, God is to you Kind and Merciful.
10. And why do you not spend in the cause of God while to God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth? Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought [and those who did so after it]. Those are greater in degree than they who spent afterwards and fought. But to all God has promised the best [reward]. And God, with what you do, is Acquainted.
11. Who is it that would loan God a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him and he will have a noble reward?
12. On the Day you see the believing men and believing women, their light proceeding before them and on their right, [it will be said], “Your good tidings today are [of] gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide eternally.” That is what is the great attainment.
13. On the [same] Day the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed, “Wait for us that we may

¹⁵¹¹ *Al-Hadeed*: Iron.

¹⁵¹² By praising Him and declaring Him far above and beyond any failure or imperfection.

¹⁵¹³ Nothing being above Him. Another meaning is “the Apparent,” i.e., evident through His creation and revelation.

¹⁵¹⁴ Nothing being nearer than Him by way of His knowledge. Another meaning is “the Unapparent,” i.e., concealed from man’s physical senses.

¹⁵¹⁵ See footnote to 2:19.

¹⁵¹⁶ In knowledge – observing and witnessing.

¹⁵¹⁷ In ways pleasing to God.

- acquire some of your light.” It will be said, “Go back behind you¹⁵¹⁸ and seek light.” And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment.
14. They [i.e., the hypocrites] will call to them [i.e., the believers], “Were we not with you?” They will say, “Yes, but you afflicted yourselves¹⁵¹⁹ and awaited [misfortune for us] and doubted, and wishful thinking deluded you until there came the command of God. And the Deceiver [i.e., Satan] deceived you concerning God.
15. So today no ransom will be taken from you or from those who disbelieved. Your refuge is the Fire. It is most worthy of you, and wretched is the destination.
16. Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of God and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient.
17. Know that God gives life to the earth after its lifelessness. We have made clear to you the signs; perhaps you will understand.¹⁵²⁰
18. Indeed, the men who practice charity and the women who practice charity and [they who] have loaned God a goodly loan - it will be multiplied for them, and they will have a noble reward.
19. And those who have believed in God and His messengers - those are [in the ranks of] the supporters of truth and the martyrs, with their Lord. For them is their reward and their light.¹⁵²¹ But those who have disbelieved and denied Our verses - those are the companions of Hellfire.
20. Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from God and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.
21. Race [i.e., compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in God and His messengers. That is the bounty of God which He gives to whom He wills, and God is the possessor of great bounty.
22. No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register¹⁵²² before We bring it into being - indeed that, for God, is easy -

¹⁵¹⁸ To where light was acquired, i.e., in the worldly life.

¹⁵¹⁹ By hypocrisy or by falling into temptations.

¹⁵²⁰ That similarly, God can soften a heart after its hardness and guide one who had previously been astray.

¹⁵²¹ Another accepted meaning is “And those who have believed in God and His messengers – they are the supporters of truth. And the martyrs, with their Lord, will have their reward and their light.”

¹⁵²² i.e., the Preserved Slate (*al-Lawh al-Mahfūth*).

23. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And God does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful -
24. [Those] who are stingy and enjoin upon people stinginess. And whoever turns away¹⁵²³ - then indeed, God is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.
25. We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down [i.e., created] iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that God may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, God is Powerful and Exalted in Might.
26. And We have already sent Noah and Abraham and placed in their descendants prophethood and scripture; and among them is he who is guided, but many of them are defiantly disobedient.
27. Then We sent following their footsteps [i.e., traditions] Our messengers and followed [them] with Jesus, the son of Mary, and gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of God. But they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave the ones who believed among them their reward, but many of them are defiantly disobedient.
28. O you who have believed, fear God and believe in His Messenger; He will [then] give you a double portion of His mercy and make for you a light by which you will walk and forgive you; and God is Forgiving and Merciful.
29. [This is] so that the People of the Scripture may know that they are not able [to obtain] anything from the bounty of God¹⁵²⁴ and that [all] bounty is in the hand¹⁵²⁵ of God; He gives it to whom He wills. And God is the possessor of great bounty.

¹⁵²³ Refusing to spend for God's cause or refusing obedience to Him.

¹⁵²⁴ As long as they refuse to believe in the message of God which was conveyed through Muhammad.

¹⁵²⁵ See footnote to 2:19.