

Sūrah 60: al-Mumtahinah

Period of Revelation

The Sūrah deals with two incidents, the time of the occurrence of which is well known historically. The first relates to Hatib bin Abz Balta'a, who, a little before the conquest of Makkah, had sent a secret letter to the Quraysh chiefs informing them of the Prophet's intention to attack them. The second relates to the Muslim women, who had started emigrating from Makkah to Madinah, after the conclusion of the Truce of Hudaibiyah, and the problem arose whether they also were to be returned to the disbelievers, like the Muslim men, according to the conditions of the Truce. The mention of these two things absolutely determines that this Sūrah came down during the interval between the Truce of Hudaibiyah and the Conquest of Makkah. Besides, there is a third thing also that has been mentioned at the end of the Sūrah to the effect: What should the Prophet make the women to pledge when they come to take the oath of allegiance before him as believers? About this part also the guess is that this too was sent down some time before the conquest of Makkah, for after this conquest a large number of the Quraysh women, like their men, were going to enter Islām simultaneously and had to be administered the oath of allegiance collectively.

Theme and Topics

This Sūrah has three parts;

The first part consists of v. 1-9, and the concluding verse 13 also relates to it. In this strong exception has been taken to the act of Hatib bin Abi Balta'a in that he had tried to inform the enemy of a very important war secret of the Prophet only for the sake of safe guarding his family. This would have caused great bloodshed at the conquest of Makkah had it not been made ineffective in time. It would have cost the Muslims many precious lives; many of the Quraysh would have been killed, who were to render great services to Islām afterward; the gains which were to accrue from conquering Makkah peacefully would have been lost, and all these serious losses would have resulted only because one of the Muslims had wanted to safeguard his family from the dangers of war. Administering a severe warning at this blunder God has taught the believers the lesson that no believer should, under any circumstances and for any motive, have relations of love and friendship with the disbelievers, who are actively hostile to Islām, and a believer should refrain from everything which might be helpful to them in the conflict between Islām and disbelief. However, there is no harm in dealing kindly and justly with those disbelievers, who may not be practically engaged in hostile activities against Islām and persecution of the Muslims.

The second part consists of v. 10-11. In this a social problem has been settled, which was agitating the minds at that time. There were many Muslim women in Makkah, whose husbands were pagans, but they were emigrating and reaching Madinah somehow. Likewise, there were many Muslim men in Madinah, whose wives were pagans and had been left behind in Makkah. The question arose whether the marriage bond between them continued to be valid or not. God settled this problem for ever, saying that the pagan husband is not lawful for the Muslim women, nor the pagan wife lawful for the Muslim husband. This decision leads to very important legal consequences, which we shall explain in our notes below.

The third section consists of verse 12, in which the Prophet has been instructed to ask the women who accept Islām to pledge that they would refrain from the major evils that were prevalent among the womenfolk of the pre-Islāmic Arab society, and to promise that they would henceforth follow the ways of goodness which the Messenger of God may enjoin.

Sūrah 60: al-Mumtahinah¹⁵⁴⁸

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

1. O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies,¹⁵⁴⁹ extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in God, your Lord. If you have come out for jihād [i.e., fighting or striving] in My cause and seeking means to My approval, [take them not as friends]. You confide to them affection [i.e., instruction], but I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared. And whoever does it among you has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way.
2. If they gain dominance over you, they would be [i.e., behave] to you as enemies and extend against you their hands and their tongues with evil, and they wish you would disbelieve.
3. Never will your relatives or your children benefit you; the Day of Resurrection He will judge between you. And God, of what you do, is Seeing.
4. There has already been for you an excellent pattern¹⁵⁵⁰ in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, "Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than God. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in God alone," - except for the saying of Abraham to his father, "I will surely ask forgiveness for you, but I have not [power to do] for you anything against God. Our Lord, upon You we have relied, and to You we have returned, and to You is the destination.
5. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] torment for the disbelievers and forgive us, our Lord. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise."
6. There has certainly been for you in them an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day. And whoever turns away - then indeed, God is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.
7. Perhaps God will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And God is competent,¹⁵⁵¹ and God is Forgiving and Merciful.
8. God does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly.
9. God only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies¹⁵⁵² of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

¹⁵⁴⁸ *Al-Mumtahinah*: That (Sūrah) Which Examines. Also called "*al-Mumtahanah*," meaning "The Woman Examined."

¹⁵⁴⁹ i.e., close associates and friends.

¹⁵⁵⁰ An example to be followed.

¹⁵⁵¹ To accomplish this or whatever He should will.

¹⁵⁵² See footnote to verse 1 of this *sūrah*.

10. O you who have believed, when the believing women come to you as emigrants, examine [i.e., test] them. God is most knowing as to their faith. And if you know them to be believers, then do not return them to the disbelievers; they are not lawful [wives] for them, nor are they lawful [husbands] for them. But give them [i.e., the disbelievers] what they have spent.¹⁵⁵³ And there is no blame upon you if you marry them when you have given them their due compensation [i.e., mahr]. And hold not to marriage bonds with disbelieving women, but ask for what you have spent and let them [i.e., the disbelievers] ask for what they have spent.¹⁵⁵⁴ That is the judgement of God; He judges between you. And God is Knowing and Wise.
11. And if you have lost any of your wives to the disbelievers and you subsequently obtain [something],¹⁵⁵⁵ then give those whose wives have gone the equivalent of what they had spent. And fear God, in whom you are believers.
12. O Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with God, nor will they steal, nor will they commit unlawful sexual intercourse, nor will they kill their children, nor will they bring forth a slander they have in-
- vented between their arms and legs,¹⁵⁵⁶ nor will they disobey you in what is right - then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them of God. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
13. O you who have believed, do not make allies of a people with whom God has become angry. They have despaired of [reward in] the Hereafter just as the disbelievers have despaired of [meeting] the companions [i.e., inhabitants] of the graves.

¹⁵⁵³ For marriage, i.e., compensate their loss.

¹⁵⁵⁴ When a disbelieving wife chose to join the disbelievers, a Muslim husband could demand in return the equivalent of her *mahr*. Likewise, the disbelievers had a similar right when a believing woman joined the Muslims. This and the following verses were revealed subsequent to the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah.

¹⁵⁵⁵ From the side of the disbelievers, i.e., war booty or a believing woman seeking refuge with the Muslims.

¹⁵⁵⁶ This is an allusion to pregnancy and childbirth, i.e., to falsely attribute a child (whether adopted or born of adultery) to a woman's husband.