

Sūrah 61: as-Saff

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any reliable hadith, but a study of its subject-matter shows that this Sūrah probably was sent down in the period closely following the Battle of Uhud, for by reading between the lines perceives a clear description of the conditions that prevailed in that period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to exhort the Muslims to adopt sincerity in Faith and to struggle with their lives in the cause of God. It is addressed to the Muslims with weak faith as well as those who had entered Islām with a false profession of the Faith and also those who were sincere in their profession. Some verses are addressed to the first two groups, some only to the hypocrites, and some only to the sincere Muslims. The style itself shows where one particular group has been addressed and where the other.

At the outset the believers have been warned to the effect; “God indeed hates those people who say one thing and do another, and He indeed loves those who fight in the cause of the Truth, standing like a solid structure, against the enemies of God.”

In v. 5-7 the people of the Prophet’s community have been warned that their attitude towards their Messenger and their Religion should not be like the attitude that the Israelites had adopted towards the Prophets Moses and Jesus. In spite of acknowledging the Prophet Moses as a Messenger of God they continued to malign him as long as he lived, and in spite of witnessing clear signs from the Prophet Jesus they denied him without any hesitation. Consequently, the Israelites became perverse, incapable of benefiting from divine guidance. This is certainly not an enviable state which another nation should imitate.

Then, in v. 8-9 a proclamation has been made with the challenge: “The Jews and the Christians, and the hypocrites, who are conspiring with them, may try however hard they may to extinguish this Light of God, it will shine forth and spread in the world in all its fullness, and the Religion brought by the true Messenger of God shall prevail over every other religion however hateful it may be to the pagans and polytheists.”

In v. 10-13, the believers have been told that the way to success both here and in the Hereafter is only one: that they should believe in God and His Messenger sincerely and should exert their utmost in God’s Way with their selves and their wealth. As a reward for this they will earn immunity from God’s punishment, forgiveness of their sins and the eternal Paradise in the Hereafter, and will be blessed with God’s good pleasure, assistance and victory in the world.

In conclusion, the believers have been exhorted to the effect that just as the disciples of the Prophet Jesus had helped him in the cause of God, so should they also become “helpers of God,” so that they too are blessed with the same kind of good pleasure and approval of God as had been the believers before them against the disbelievers.

Sūrah 61: as-Saff¹⁵⁵⁷

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

1. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth exalts God,¹⁵⁵⁸ and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
2. O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?
3. Great is hatred in the sight of God that you say what you do not do.
4. Indeed, God loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly.
5. And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moses said to his people, “O my people, why do you harm me while you certainly know that I am the messenger of God to you?” And when they deviated, God caused their hearts to deviate. And God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.
6. And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, “O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of God to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad.”¹⁵⁵⁹ But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, “This is obvious magic.”¹⁵⁶⁰
7. And who is more unjust than one who invents about God untruth while he is being invited to Islām. And God does not guide the wrongdoing people.
8. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God will perfect His light, although the disbelievers dislike it.
9. It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although those who associate others with God dislike it.
10. O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment?
11. [It is that] you believe in God and His Messenger and strive in the cause of God with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you should know.
12. He will forgive for you your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence. That is the great attainment.
13. And [you will obtain] another [favor] that you love - victory from God and an imminent conquest; and give good tidings to the believers.
14. O you who have believed, be supporters of God, as when Jesus, the son of Mary, said to the disciples, “Who are my supporters for God?” The disciples said, “We are supporters of God.” And a faction of the Children of Israel believed and a faction disbelieved. So We supported those who believed against their enemy, and they became dominant.

¹⁵⁵⁷ *As-Saff*: The Row.

¹⁵⁵⁸ See footnote to 57:1.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Another name of Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁵⁶⁰ i.e., fraud or deception.