



Sūrah al-Anfāl

Theme

This is the third *sūrah* of the fourth chapter. It was revealed in Madīnah. It directs the believers to organize themselves on the basis of piety, brotherhood, sympathy and obedience to God and His Messenger and also tells them to prepare for *jihād*. The objective in giving these directives is to make them worthy recipients of the religion of Abraham (sws) and its centre: the House of God. The latter was soon to be consigned to their custodianship.

In the previous two *sūrahs*, it has been shown that the Quraysh are no longer worthy of being the custodians of the House of God because of their beliefs, deeds and morals. In this *sūrah*, attention has been directed to organize the believers as a separate entity and to reform and cleanse their beliefs and practices. It begins by warning weak Muslims on their blemishes in the battle of Badr. These blemishes related to falling short in obeying God and His Messenger and were against faith and trust in Him. The purpose was to make them realize that they must get rid of these weaknesses. After that God's invisible forces that helped them in this battle are referred to so that their trust in Him is strengthened; moreover, people who had until then not become devoted to the cause of God should commit to this and become able to fulfil the requisites of the phases that lie in store. After that, the believers are urged to wage *jihād*. They are promised that if they do not show weakness, then soon the time will come when the conspiracies of their rivals will be exposed. In between, the Quraysh are also warned to learn a lesson from the battle of Badr. Even now, it is better for them if they benefit from it; otherwise, if they continue with their mischief, they will be routed. The reason that they have been treated leniently until then is that the Messenger was present among them. God's established practice is that as long as a Messenger is among his nation, they are not punished. However, now that he has migrated from them, they are no longer secure and God's torment can visit them any time. Their conceited notion that they are custodians of the House of God has no basis. They are not worthy of this because they have not followed the objective for which this House was built by Abraham (sws), and have violated its sanctity. The prayer and worship they offer is nothing but a joke. If they want to remain secure from God's wrath, they must repent and reform themselves; otherwise, they should bear in mind that now they will neither have the chance of inflicting hardships on the believers nor will any other religion except that of God will be allowed to exist in this



land.

Further ahead, in the light of the events of the battle of Badr, the believers are encouraged and the disbelievers are warned and the objections raised by the Quraysh after being defeated in the battle are cited. They raised these objections to induce the common man to think ill of the Prophet (sws). Before the battle took place, they presented the weakness and helplessness of the believers as an excuse against Islam. However, after being defeated in the battle by these weak believers, they started another propaganda against the Prophet (sws): how can he be a messenger of God when he is making people of the same tribe fight among themselves, having them killed or imprisoning them and then exacting ransom from them; moreover, he loots and plunders their wealth in the form of spoils of war. These objections could have influenced the weak believers. For this reason, the Qur'ān clarified them and at the end directed the *anṣār* and the *muhājirūn* to maintain their mutual brotherhood ties; both should stand together as a solid wall against the disbelievers.

Though this brief survey of the contents of the *sūrah* is also sufficient to understand its coherence, I will still analyze its meanings to further explain it.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-4): An objection raised in the form of a question by some weak Muslims is cited and briefly responded to. While keeping this objection in consideration, Muslims are told that if they are true believers, they should keep fearing God, cleanse their mutual relationships from malice and envy and obey God and His Messenger in every matter. After that, the traits of true believers are briefly cited and they are promised great reward from God.

Verses (5-8): Another weakness of weak Muslims is referred to. This became evident when Muslims were going out to fight the battle of Badr: they very well knew that the Prophet (sws)'s march against the enemy was meant to fight the Quraysh army who wanted to attack Madīnah on the false pretext that Muslims were going to attack the trade caravan; even then, these weak Muslims started to fear the Quraysh army and they tried their full best that the Prophet (sws) turn towards the trade caravan so that without any threat they can grab the caravan as an easy prey; the fact was that the intention of God and His Messenger was that the truth should prevail and falsehood should be decimated; this could have only been possible if the military might of the Quraysh was routed and not by going after an unarmed caravan.

Verses (9-14): In order to strengthen and encourage Muslims, the invisible help from God in the battle of Badr is cited. As a consequence to the prayer of supplication by the believers, they are told that one thousand angels will be available at hand for them. It is then depicted that the Muslims were able to sleep peacefully in the battlefield and also benefit from the rain sent down. The helping angels are directed to maintain the courage of the Muslims intact and to over-awe the disbelievers and totally rout them.

Verses (15-18): In the light of the afore-mentioned invisible help of God, Muslims



are directed to never run away from the battlefield when they encounter the disbelievers. If they do so in the wake of an organized attack, they will earn the wrath of God and the punishment of Hell. It is stated that when Muslims wage war for the cause of God, it is not just they who fight; God also fights with them and gives the believers the opportunities to show their prowess. They have seen this in the battle of Badr. And not just at this instance, in future also, God will not let the plans of the disbelievers to succeed.

Verses (19): The Quraysh are warned forthwith: they used to say that whoever wins this battle will be regarded to be on the truth. They should see that victory has manifested itself. They should not dare indulge in any further mischief. If they do not desist, they should remember that God has not gone anywhere. He will show His majesty to them. They should also fully keep in mind that their huge army is not going to be of any avail to them because God is alongside the believers.

Verses (20-23): Muslims are directed to faithfully obey God and His Messenger. They should not deviate from the Messenger right in his presence. This attitude is actually shown by the Jews: they would commit to obey but would in fact not do so. The worst of animals before God are the deaf and the dumb who do not think and understand. God could not find any ability in them and for this reason deprived them of the yearning to accept the truth. Only those people are blessed with this urge from God who have the ability to be influenced and accept the truth.

Verses (24-26): Muslims are warned that the preaching of God's Messenger is life for their heart and soul. So they should duly value it and accept it. If they show weakness and hesitancy, they should bear in mind that God's established practice forms a barrier between a person and his faculty of intention. Then he is deprived of the urge to do good. In collective life, if people do not try to reform the mistakes made by some specific individuals, then every person good or bad, has to bear their evil consequences. They should not be inflicted with any doubt or reluctance regarding the future of Islam. At one time, they were few in this land. God increased their number and help them. So they should trust God; He will help them in the next phases too.

Verses (27-29): Weak Muslims are warned that after pledging allegiance to God and His Messenger, they should not breach it. The love for wealth and children should not hinder them to fulfil the requisites of love for God and His Messenger. These things are trials. By being entangled in them, they should not waste the great reward which God has reserved for His faithful servants. Those who do not let the love of this world prevail on them will get to know from God what true evil is and will be forgiven by Him.

Verses (30-37): The Prophet (sws) is addressed and reminded of the divine help the believers continuously received against the Quraysh and as a result of which all their plans miserably failed and the plan of God prevailed. They would call the Qur'ān as a tale of the ancients but its warnings to them proved to be correct. They demanded that if Muḥammad is God's Messenger, they will only believe in him if stones be hurled



from the sky or some punishment visit them. They regarded themselves to be the custodians of the House of God but they were undeserving of this status. Only people who fear God can be its custodians. The Quraysh who claim to be its custodians have no knowledge of its history or objective. Clapping hands and whistling are regarded by them to be their prayer. What relationship can this jocular activity have with the religion of Abraham (sws)? They audaciously spend in stopping people from the path of God and to defeat Islam; this is a useless activity. All their spending will become a means of regret for them. Now only Hell is in front of them. God will gather all these evil elements and consign them to Hell.

Verses (38-40): The disbelievers of the Quraysh are warned that it is better for them if they desist from their mischief. If they reform themselves, their previous mistakes shall be forgiven. However, if they persist, then they should remember that they will meet the same fate as the one met by the rejecters of the previous prophets. The believers are directed to continue to wage war against them until the persecution they have let loose on the weak Muslims ends and only the religion of God exists in the land and all other religions are exterminated. If these people desist from their evil ways, it is better for them. If they do not, the God is the helper of the believers and He is the best of helpers.

Verses (41-44): The question raised in the first verse of the *sūrah* about the spoils of war is answered in detail. The believers are warned that they should accept this distribution with full contentment of their hearts. To remain satisfied with the decision of God and His Messenger is the sign of true faith and its requisite. They should remember that the success they have achieved is not because of their own planning and effort. In fact, this scheme has been chalked out by God. It was because of His execution of this scheme that the army of the believers reached that end of the valley opposite to which the army of the disbelievers had reached. If both had first given an ultimatum, it would have been impossible for them to reach the enemy at the right time. It was the scheme of God because of which the two met in battle. He wanted a decisive battle to be fought between the believers and the Quraysh so that truth and falsehood become evident as a result. Moreover, this would result in the conclusive communication of the truth to those who want to adhere to the disbelief. Similarly, those who want to accept Islam are provided with a clear argument. It was because of this that the Almighty showed the army of the disbelievers to be small in number in the Prophet's dream. Thus this did not create any fear among the Muslims and they remained prepared to face the enemy with courage. Then precisely because of this reason when the two armies met, the army of the disbelievers was made to appear trivial by God in the eyes of the believers and at the same time they were made to appear less in the eyes of the disbelievers. This made both ready to face one another and participate in a battle that would become a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. The believers should know that the key to all affairs is in the hands of God.

Verses (45-46): Muslims are advised for future: they have seen in the battle of Badr



that it is God Who had decisively helped them in it; so in future, if they fight a war, they must do so with full strength and courage and while remembering God – their real guardian. This alone is the path of success. They must fully obey God and His Messenger and not differ in any matter. If they do so, they will be vanquished. The second thing that is needed with obedience is perseverance and resolve. God is with those who persevere in His cause.

Verses (47-49): Believers are told to not follow the ways of the disbelievers who had shown conceit, arrogance and pomposity while entering the battlefield. They showed off their grander and their purpose was to stop people from the way of God. Little did they know that no one has a say against God. The military might and splendour of every army is in His hands. Satan had led them astray by making them believe that no one can defeat them and that he was their companion. However, when he saw the battlefield, he became scared and ran away, right in accordance with his tradition. He felt God's fear in him. This is also a subtle sarcasm on the Jews, as shall be clarified in the exegesis. The hypocrites and the envious would censure Muslims to discourage them. They contended that the Muslims have become indifferent to the consequences because of their arrogant pride in their religion. These hypocrites did not know that great is God's trust. He is powerful and wise.

Verses (50-54): The Quraysh are warned that their defeat in the battle of Badr is just the first instalment of the humiliation that lies in store for them. What is going to befall them after their death is something very horrific. What has happened or what is going to happen is no injustice to them; it is the natural consequence of their own misdeeds. God does not change His attitude with a nation until that nation changes its own attitude. Before them, the nation of the Pharaoh and the others were dealt in the same way by God. When they denied God's revelations, they were warned by God. When after this warning they came even more rebellious, they were seized by God's punishment and were destroyed. Similarly, the battle of Badr was a warning for the Quraysh. If they do not learn a lesson from it, they will meet the same fate as that of the Pharaoh and his nation.

Verses (55-62): The Prophet (sws) is directed to not be lenient to those who dishonour their agreements and whenever an opportunity arises, break them. If he encounters them in a battle, he should teach them such a lesson that those who are supporting them are shaken and jolted too. These people are not beyond the Prophet's grasp. The believers are directed to increase their military might as much as they can so that they can strike awe in the hearts of God's and their own enemies. Some of these enemies are known and some are hidden as yet. Whatever the believers spend in this cause will be fully compensated before God and no reduction would come about. However, if these enemies desire peace, the believers should not evade it and while trusting God should accept it. If in the garb of peace they want to deceive the Prophet (sws), sufficient for them is the God Who specially helped him and through the believers supported him. It is God's graciousness that He has joined the hearts of all



the believers for the Prophet (sws) alone could not have accomplished this even if he had spent all the treasures of this world.

Verses (63-65): The Prophet (sws) is assured to not worry if his followers are few in number. Enough for him is God and this small group of Muslims. He should urge and exhort these followers to wage *jihād*. Twenty of his brave warriors are sufficient for two hundred warriors of the disbelievers and one hundred of them will be able to defeat an enemy force of one thousand. War is fought on the basis of faith and determination. These traits are not found in these naïve disbelievers.

Verses (66): This verse was revealed later when people began entering the folds of Islam in multitudes. It depicts a reduction in the essence of their military might stated earlier. Now one of their warriors would be sufficient for only two of the disbelievers. The reason for this reduction was that these later Muslims did not have the same extent of faith as that of the early Muslims.

Verses (67-69): A poignant criticism of the disbelievers raised against the Prophet (sws) is answered. They had contended that how can he be a messenger of God when he fights his own people, sheds their blood, captures captives and accepts ransom from them and by regarding the wealth of his nation to be spoils of war distributes it among his soldiers and himself also becomes its beneficiary. The purpose of this poisonous criticism was to erase the affects of the victory in Badr on the hearts of the common man. The leaders of the Quraysh themselves had regarded this battle to be a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. However, after their own defeat, they had to change this propaganda. Now they started to say that Muḥammad (sws), God forbid, was desirous of political authority, and for this purpose had pitted his own people against one another. A prophet of God can never do this. The Qur'ān has answered this by saying that whatever has happened is not because of the Prophet (sws); in fact, it is they themselves who are to be blamed for this. They are desirous of the pleasures of this worldly life. God and His messengers never have such a desire. Such is the heinous nature of their conspiracy to uproot Islam and the Muslims that a terrible punishment from God would have decided their fate once and for all. However, God has prescribed a certain period of respite for every nation and they are still passing to this period. So instead of being destroyed by a torment, they have been let off after being sounded a warning. After this, the believers are addressed and told that they should not worry about the objection these people are raising about their spoils of war. They can use and consume them; they are perfectly permissible to them.

Verses (70): In this regard, the captives of the battle of Badr are informed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that if God found good in their hearts and if they valued the favour that they were released after ransom, then He will open more ways for them. However, if they were unfaithful and broke their promises and again set out to fight against God, they should remember that God will make the believers prevail over them just as He did in the battle of Badr.

Verses (71-75): Brotherhood is instituted between the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*. All



Muslims who migrated to Madīnah from various territories are included in it. Muslims living in the abode of Islam (*dār al-islām*) have no obligation to help those who do not migrate to them. If these Muslims need help for the protection of their faith, they should be helped provided that any agreement in this regard is not breached or opposed. Now it would be on the basis of faith and migration that rights and obligations would be discharged and help provided. It would not be on the basis of previous familial and tribal relations. However, the basis of the mutual rights of the believers would be their blood relations that have been stated in the Book of God.

Section I: Verses (1-8)

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ فَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَاصْلَحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾ كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَاہُونَ ﴿٥﴾ يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَكُنَا يُسَاقُوتُونَ إِلَى الْبُوتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلِتُزْكَرَ الْعُجْرُمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

They ask you about the spoils of war. Tell them: The spoils belong to God and the Messenger. Thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers. Believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, they increase their faith and they trust their Lord only. Those who are diligent in the prayer and spend from what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. (1-4)

A similar situation arose when your Lord directed you to depart from your houses for a purpose and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims. They continued to dispute with you regarding this true matter, even though the truth was fully evident to them. It seemed as if they were being driven to death and they were watching this. Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of



the groups. And you wanted to get the unarmed one. And God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it. (5-8)

Explanation

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ ۖ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَاتِ بَيْنِكُمْ ۚ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾¹

The word الْأَنْفَالِ is the plural of نَفْل and refers to what is given as an additional amount beyond what is required. Here it refers to the spoils of war which are acquired in the battlefield from the vanquished enemy by those waging war for the cause of God. This term shows that what these warriors gain is an additional reward besides the one they earn from waging war. This additional reward lies safe with them God as an abiding and abundant prize from Him.

At times a question raised is for the purpose of objection, whether this becomes evident from a word or is concealed in it. Concomitant indications show that here the question has been raised as an objection. This question, as has been referred to earlier, is about the spoils acquired from the battle of Badr. Prior to this, neither did the Muslims have the chance to face the disbelievers in an organized battle nor was the question about its distribution ever raised. This battle took place in 2 AH. God not only granted them a grand victory in it, they also gained a lot of spoils from it. In the pre-Islamic days of *jāhiliyyah*, the convention was that whatever a combatant looted belonged to him. Because of this convention, some people, in particular, weak Muslims raised certain questions that showed that piety, well-wishing and the spirit of obedience to God and His messenger which is a requisite of true faith had not found roots in their hearts. It is evident from these indications that only some individuals had raised these questions. However, this showed the presence of a great evil in the Islamic society. For this very purpose, the Almighty began this *sūrah* from this incident that was meant to cleanse and discipline the believers.

This incident was mentioned in an unspecified way so that this group was not exposed, all the believers were able to accept this teaching in their collective capacity and any notion that is against piety, trust, mutual concern and obedience to God and His messenger is not developed in them.

History and Biography books do mention the details of the nature of the question. Ibn Hishām (*Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, vol. 3, 219) says that after the battle, the Prophet (sws) ordered that all the spoils be collected at one place. Thus this was done and then people started to differ about its way of distribution. Those who collected it

1. They ask you about the spoils of war. Tell them: The spoils belong to God and the Messenger. Thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers.



claimed their right over it as they thought without their effort it could not have been gathered. They contended that it was they who had made the enemy run away, as a result of which these spoils were obtained. Similarly, those who were guarding the Prophet (sws) claimed that they too could do all of this but they preferred the security of the Prophet (sws) to be their top priority; thus they have a stronger claim on these spoils. So different questions were raised. As a result, some latent weaknesses found in people became evident. It was the sagacity of God that came into action to cure these ailments as soon as they arose so that they are nipped in their buds.

A comprehensive answer to all the questions is stated in the words: “the spoils belong to God and the Messenger.” In the Qur’ān, this signifies collective ownership. This principled answer ended the convention of the *jāhiliyyah* period regarding the spoils of war, as a result of which these questions were raised. In other words, the basis of being entitled to the spoils is not the person who collected them or the one who waged war or the one who was on guard. In fact, all warriors, regardless of the nature of their duties, will have a share in it as well as other Muslims too. Once this principle was delineated in the answer, the next verses turned towards reforming and rectifying the weaknesses of the believers that became evident from this incident. Moreover, later in verse 41, details were furnished regarding the share of the warriors as well as the amount that would be consigned to the public treasury.

Consider the part “thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs.” Just as piety and regard for blood ties were regarded as the foundation for the well-being of family and society in Sūrah al-Nisā’, here piety and reforming one another was regarded as the foundation of the collective organization of Muslims. The implication is that when the spoils are primarily owned by God and His Messenger, it is up to them how they distribute them and the believers should whole-heartedly accept this distribution. No reservation or ill-thought should arise regarding it nor jealousy be shown to fellow-human beings if they were made its recipients. All Muslims are brothers to one another. The basis of their mutual relations is their brotherhood, blood ties and love. They are a group of noble souls that are an embodiment of mercy and love for one another. Selfishness and envy are against the faith and piety they have adhered to. They should cleanse their feelings towards their fellow human beings and do away with all things that tarnish the mirror of their souls.

The words “and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers” state the real consequence of faith in God. It is contrary to faith to rebel against a directive given by God and His Messenger if it is not in accordance with the desires of people. In fact, such a directive should be whole-heartedly accepted without any feeling of ill-will. The part “if you are true believers” shows that those who lay claim to faith must fully understand the essence of faith. The claim to faith of those who did not understand this essence of faith is absolutely baseless.



إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾
الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ²

These verses state the traits of true believers. In other words, the portrait of these believers has been sketched before the weak ones referred to in “if you are true believers” of the previous verse. The purpose is to urge them to inculcate these traits in themselves. Without them, it is not befitting to lay claim to faith.

The first trait stated about them is that they have a deep comprehension of the exaltedness and majesty of God. For this reason, they keep fearing Him. Whenever He is mentioned before them or when they are reminded of Him or something is presented before them on His behalf, they listen to it in awe and fear. In other words, the first requisite of faith is the fear of God. This arises because of a true picture of His greatness and exaltedness and of His attributes of justice, wisdom, providence and mercy. It is this that produces the *taqwā* mentioned in the first verse of this *sūrah*. It may be borne in mind that the God’s mercy and providence also necessitate His justice and a day of reward and punishment. Thus the true comprehension of these attributes also does not make a person carefree and indifferent to God; in fact, it increases His fear and the basis of this fear is His love.

The second trait mentioned is that when God’s revelations are recited before them, their faith increases. Concomitant indications show that the revelations here refer to His directives and laws. The implication is that after professing faith in God, they are most desirous of the knowledge of His likes and dislikes and this knowledge increases their treasure of faith. The example of faith is that of a root and the directives and commands of religion are the branches and fruits that sprout from this root. In other words, the whole *sharī‘ah* is a manifestation of faith and an explanation of its implications.

The style in “they increase their faith” also shows when the demands and requisites of faith come before those who have faith, they welcome them whole-heartedly. They regard these requisites to be fruit of the tree they themselves have cultivated. Moreover, just as every farmer is overjoyed to see the produce of his land and fruits of his orchards increase, in as a similar way, these believers are elated to see their increase in faith. This in other words is a subtle sarcasm on those claimants to faith who had made tall claims to it, but when its demands and requisites came before them they were struck with consternation instead of being happy.

It should also be kept in mind that after professing faith whatever small or big

2. Believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, they increase their faith and they trust their Lord only. Those who are diligent in the prayer and spend from what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance.



requirement of it comes before a believer, it opens up a sphere of trial for him. True believers are not worried on this trial; they in fact try to sail through it successfully. This effort is a natural requisite of the chivalry produced in them by faith. Expending this effort opens new frontiers of victory for them that continue to strengthen their faith. In verse 22 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, this fact is stated thus: لَبَّاءُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْآحْزَابُ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا³

The third trait of the believers expressed is that they trust their Lord. In other words, whether these requisites are easy or difficult, whether they are beneficial or harmful to their worldly interests and whether relationships are built or severed, they regard success in both worldly and religious affairs to reside in showing obedience to their Lord. So much so, if they have to sacrifice their lives also for the cause of faith, they are convinced that this will give them eternal life. They fully trust their Lord that whatever directive He has given and whatever test He has made them pass through will result in their own well-being. No dealing of God with His servants is devoid of wisdom and expediency, mercy and blessings. This part of the verse too expresses sarcasm on the weak Muslims who wanted to weigh the demands of religion in the scales of their personal interests and regarded everything against their desires to be against expediency.

The fourth trait is actually an amalgam of two foundational attributes: diligence in the prayer and in *zakāh*. They are like a thread that knits together all those traits faith wants to embellish the believers with. In other words, after stating earlier the traits that were needed to reform the referred to weak Muslims, at the end, two things are mentioned which comprehensively cover all these traits and also protect them.

It is next stated that all those who have these traits are true believers. As for those who have infiltrated among the believers but are devoid of these traits, they are mere claimants to faith; they are not true believers. It is as if what was insinuated by the words “if you are true believers” in the very first verse has now become fully evident.

The words “for them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance” show that this reward is not for all believers but for those only who possess these traits. In this context, the word “forgiveness” is very subtle and carries glad tidings. Evident from it is that though it is all these traits that are required and the ranks given to those who profess with them will depend on how much they adhere to them, yet God is merciful and gracious. He is aware of the weakness of His servants as well. Thus He magnanimously forgives them because as human beings they are liable to err.

The word “sustenance” (*rizq*) is a comprehensive one. It is qualified by the attribute “honourable” (*karīm*). In other words, though all these rewards will be gained because

3. And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger had already warned us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience.



of God's graciousness, yet the recipients would have earned them.

It becomes evident from all these details that faith is no barren tree. On the contrary, it has both roots and branches and fruits. In verse 24 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, it has been likened to a tree that has very deep roots and whose branches are vastly spread in the sky. Just as it is based on beliefs, it is also based on directives. Just as a lush tree receives its nourishment both from its roots and leaves and branches too, in a similar way, faith receives strength and nourishment from the comprehension of beliefs and from the carrying out of good deeds. If these beliefs become hollow and barren, this tree will wither away and if its branches are diseased, then too it will wilt away. For its healthy development, it is essential that both its roots and branches are properly looked after. If this is done, it develops and grows strong. In its absence, it shrivels, shrinks and fades away. In my opinion, it is this fact that becomes evident from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth.

Moreover, there can only be one correct interpretation of what our jurists and scholastics allude to when they say that faith static: they refer to its legal aspect. Law only relates to what is external; what is internal is beyond its grasp. For this reason, in the eyes of the law, there is no difference between the faith of a sincere believer and that of a hypocrite. However, this does not mean that this is true in reality as well.

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَاَهُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَكُنَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشُّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْغَافِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾⁴

Like the words كَذَلِكَ and كَذَلِكَ, the word كَمَا is also used to express the similarity of two incidents. In such cases, the compared and the compared to are not mentioned in specific words. They are found in the incident as a whole. In verse 143, the word كَذَلِكَ has been used similarly. In his famous ode, Imru al-Qays has portrayed a well-known love story and then by the words كَذَلِكَ من أمر الحويرث قبلها⁵ narrates other stories implying their similarity. In verse 151 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the change of *qiblah* has been mentioned. Then without any prior introduction, the words used are: كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا

4. A similar situation arose when your Lord directed you to depart from your houses for a purpose and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims. They continued to dispute with you regarding this true matter, even though the truth was fully evident to them. It seemed as if they were being driven to death and they were watching this. Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of the groups. And you wanted to get the unarmed one. And God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it.

5. Abū Zayd al-Qarshī, *Jamhurah ash'ār al-'arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, n.d.), 80



مِنْكُمْ. The implication is that just as the Almighty separated the *qiblah* of the believers from that of the People of the Book, he made them a separate community.

The كَا of the verse under discussion is no different. Earlier, the weak Muslims were checked on their attitude; they had objected on the distribution of the spoils obtained from the battle of Badr. Once this weakness was mentioned, as a requisite of their education and instruction, attention was directed to another weakness. This weakness became evident earlier when the Prophet (sws) had departed from Madīnah for the battle. In other words, at that time their mistake was ignored. Wisdom entailed this. However, when a similar mistake was made again by them, they were admonished. At the same time, the previous mistake was referred to as well so that they get to know the origin of this ailment and what it can lead it if it is not set right.

It is clearly evident from the words “your Lord directed you to depart from your houses” that the Prophet’s departure for Badr was at the behest of the Almighty. In verses 42-43, it is indicated that in a dream the Prophet (sws) was shown the approaching caravan of the Quraysh from Syria and the Quraysh army from Makkah. In this dream, it was also shown that in its essence the attacking army would not be much and would in fact be vanquished by the believers. In fact, it is also evident from various reports that in this dream, the Prophet (sws) was also shown the spots where some particular leaders would die. It is in accordance with the directive found in this dream that the Prophet (sws) departed for Badr. The Qur’ān called his departure as “your Lord directed you to depart from your houses.” In verse 43 ahead, it becomes evident that it was because of this divine guidance that the believers reached Badr precisely at the right time to face the Quraysh: at one end of the valley was their army while the caravan was passing below it.

The word بِالْحَقِّ shows that this departure was for a purpose. In verse 8, this purpose has been explained thus: “and God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it.” It is evident from this that from the very start the departure of the Prophet (sws) at the behest of God was for a true purpose. It is obvious that evil could only be rooted out if the Quraysh were humiliated and not by plundering the trade caravan. For this reason, the narrative recorded in books of biography that says that the Prophet (sws) actually wanted to attack the trade caravan that was coming back from Syria under the leadership of Abū Sufyān is totally against the Qur’ān.

The words “and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims” refer to the group of weak Muslims whose character is under discussion since the start of the *sūrah* and which raised questions about the spoils of war that were discussed earlier. It is evident from the undefined nature of the word فَرِيقًا that the group was not large in number. When the people of this group would have heard that two factions of the disbelievers were coming and they have to fight one of them, they must have



understood that it was the army against which they had to fight and not the caravan. For this reason, they became terrified and this terror was the consequence of their weak trust in God, as indicated in verse 2.

The word *مجادلة* used in verse 6 means to try to convince the addressees by emphasizing one's point and by presenting various excuses.

This verse depicts the escape route they had tried to adopt when they felt threatened by the advancing army. They would have tried to emphatically and by false justifications convince the Prophet (sws) to go for the trade caravan. They must have made it appear that this suggestion was in the interest and well-being of Islam and the Muslims: plundering the caravan would break the back of the economic lifeline of the Quraysh because this caravan was carrying a large amount of their finances; this wealth would go a long way in solving the economic problems of the Muslims. However, at the bottom of this suggestion was that fear which the Qur'ān has exposed in this verse by saying that it was as if they were being driven to death and they were in fact staring at it. The most dangerous aspect of this suggestion was that they fully knew the intent of the Prophet (sws), as is evident from the words "even though the truth was fully evident to them." In spite of this, they employed tactics of all sorts to persuade the Prophet (sws) to go for the trade caravan. It is evident from the next verse that until then the Prophet (sws) had not clearly expressed his intent because of certain reasons that will be stated later; however, these people were not so thick-headed as to not know the choice of the Prophet (sws) between the advancing army and the caravan. These people were cowards doubtless but they were still clever enough to know that what the Prophet's temperament, the objective of religion and the requisites of making the truth prevail were. How could they have not understood that for looting a trade-caravan the Prophet (sws) would have made such preparations to go out with his companions. Thus it will be detailed out later that neither the leaders of the *muhājirūn* nor those of the *anṣār* had any difficulty in understanding the intent of the Prophet (sws). At the very start, everyone understood his intent and started to prepare for it. It was only one group which continued to make excuses until the end because of the fear of death. For this reason, their attitude was discussed by the Qur'ān so that the believers were fully aware of the mischief that looms in their own ranks.

Consider verse 7: "Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of the groups." There is vagueness in this promise. It is not stated explicitly that the Quraysh have sent an army on the false pretext of protecting their caravan and that they must go out and fight it and that God will make them overpower it. What is stated is vague: two groups of the Quraysh are coming – one of which will be given to the Muslims. The reason for adopting this style is to distinguish the sincere believers from the hypocrites so that before people embark for a big campaign, it becomes known who stands where. Obviously, if the matter was stated in clear words by the Prophet (sws), both the sincere believers and the hypocrites would have to commit



positively. No one could have dared differed with it and hidden weaknesses would have never been exposed. In the battle of Uḥud too, the Prophet (sws) adopted a similar scheme. At that time, he had asked people whether the battle should be fought while being fortified in the city or by going out and he himself did not express his opinion. The consequence was that the sincere elements opined to go out and fight and the weak ones suggested that they should stay in the city. In this way, the Prophet (sws) was able to identify the sincere and the insincere. Details have already been referred to earlier in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl- ‘Imrān. It for the same reason that at this instance too the Prophet (sws) stated his intent in vague terms to find out the thinking of his followers. Hence he first elicited the opinion of the *muhājirūn*. They fully understood his intent. Thus Miqdād ibn ‘Umar (rta) got up and made such a soul-stirring speech that its reverberations will forever be heard in the annals of Muslims. He had said:

O Messenger of God! Step out to accomplish your suggestion. Wherever you go, we will be by your side. We are not ones who will say to you what the Israelites had said to Moses: go you and your Lord to fight. We will sit here. In fact, our opinion is that both you and your Lord go out to fight; even if one of our eyes is intact, we will be ready to sacrifice our lives.⁶

Can it be even imagined those on whose behalf this speech was made could have even vaguely thought of the trade-caravan?

After listening to this, the Prophet (sws) repeated the words referred to earlier. The *anṣār* understood that this time their opinion was being elicited. Then Sa’d ibn Mu’ādh (rta), one of their leaders, delivered that speech every word of which is like a marital song whose flames of faith still shimmer in spite of the passage of fourteen centuries. He had said:

We have professed faith in you and we have attested you. We bear witness that only the religion you have brought is the truth. We have pledged a covenant of “to listen and to obey” at your hands. Thus O Messenger of God! Fulfil your intent. By the God Who has sent you with the truth that if you take us to the shores of this ocean and jump into it, we we are with you and we too will jump into it; none of us is going to remain behind. We are not worried at all that tomorrow you will take us to fight against the enemy. We will remain steadfast in the battle. We will prove ourself to be upright in the contest and it may well be that through our hands God show that which soothes your eyes. So with the name of God, give us the chance to accompany you.⁷

6. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabwawīyyah*, vol. 3, 161-162.

7. Ibid., vol. 3, 162.



Can these speeches be of those who were intending to plunder a caravan which comprised of not more than forty people. If it is deliberated further does it not become evident that in spite of the vagueness present in the referred statement of the Prophet (sws), it was fully clear to both the *anṣār* and the *muhājirūn* what his intention was? However, there was one group of weak Muslims who because of its cowardliness and in spite of knowing the truth wanted to attack the caravan. The caravan was not even armed and they thus wanted to easily waylay and conquer it. It was while addressing these people that it was said: تَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشُّوكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ (you wanted to get the unarmed one). The word شُوكَة means “a thorn.” Here it is used for weapons and then for awe. Since the trade-caravan was unarmed, the words used are: غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشُّوكَةِ.

Verse 8 states a logical and a natural standard to understand God’s intent. Every directive of God is to make the truth prevail and root out evil. Hence in order to ascertain His intent, even if it is rather concisely stated, this principle must always be kept in mind. Those who desired to attack the caravan did not think that how can God have this intent since it neither makes the truth prevail nor roots out evil and evil-doers. There is a certain amount of vagueness found in the word كَلِمَات (translated as “words”). Since the statement given on this occasion was vague, this word was used. It is such statements whose interpretation is difficult. On such occasions, the attitude of the believers should be that they interpret it in accordance with the attributes and majesty of God and not in a way that negates them.

The Qur’ān has made it evident from the words “and root out the disbelievers” that the root of disbelief was the faction of the Quraysh. It was they who needed to be rooted out and God could only have wanted to root it out but one group of the Muslims wanted to take on the trade-caravan.

The words “make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood” are explaining the purpose of “and root out the disbelievers.” God does not have any enmity with anyone; however making the truth prevail and eliminating falsehood is a requisite of His attributes. He has now taken this decision. It shall now be done, even if these wrongdoers do not want it.

The picture of the battle of the Badr that emerges from all these insinuations of the Qur’ān is totally different than what is depicted in books of biographies of the Prophet (sws) and of his military campaigns. The orientalists have made it look even more horrible by exaggerating its accounts.

It is evident from the Qur’ān that the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims had no intention to go after the trade caravan of the Quraysh. It was the Quraysh who plotted to attack Madīnah and for this fabricated the false pretext of providing protection to their caravan. The Quraysh were scared to see Muslims spreading their roots in Madīnah. Besides religious malice, they also reckoned that from then on the trade route of Syria and Makkah would also not be safe for them to tread. For this reason,



right after the migration of the Prophet (sws), they were in search of some pretext to destroy the Muslims before they could become a force. Whether Abū Sufyān (rta), the leader of the caravan, smelled any unfounded danger of a Muslim attack and therefore sent a person to inform the Quraysh of an imminent Muslim attack or the leaders of the Quraysh were already conniving for this – in any case a strong army of the Quraysh departed for Madīnah at the news given to them by Abū Sufyān (rta). It is in this phase that the Prophet (sws) is informed through a dream that two groups of the Quraysh are coming, one of which will fight the Muslims.

After this, the Prophet (sws) decided to leave Madīnah for Badr and to gauge the extent of the courage found in Muslims presented the whole situation to them in a vague manner saying that two groups of the Quraysh were coming. Muslims will fight one of them and defeat them. As soon as the Prophet (sws) said this, all the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* understood that an army of the Quraysh was approaching and they will have to reckon with it. Thus their leaders assured the Prophet (sws) with full force and enthusiasm that they would remain faithful to him and even lay down their lives for Islam if the need arose. However, there were also a handful of people among them who stressed that instead of the army, they should go for the trade caravan so that they could earn heavy spoils without even shedding any blood. It was to expose this small faction that the Prophet (sws) had expressed the whole undertaking in vague terms so that those in whom some weakness was concealed were exposed and the sincere and the hypocrites among the Muslims were distinguished even before the war.

In the light of the coming verses of this sūrah, it will be shown that the Jews had sought to provide support to the Quraysh for this battle but when they saw what was ensuing in it, they deserted them right in accordance with their tradition.

Section II: Verses (9-19)

In the upcoming verses, the Almighty has referred to His armies that had encouraged and helped the believers at this instance so that this strengthens their faith in the promises of God and in the future of Islam. Earlier the issue of weak Muslims was mentioned obviously to reform the collectivity of which they were a part. Now for this very purpose they are reminded of some more things that would be needed by them in the coming phases. At the same time, the disbelievers of the Quraysh are also warned that the reversal they have suffered is just a prelude. If they continue with this behaviour, they will encounter harder days in future. They had regarded this battle to be a barometer to measure truth and evil and its result is before them. Even if now their eyes are not opened and they continue with their ill-ways, then they should remember that God has not gone anywhere. Their arrogance that has resulted because of their wealth and large number will bear no consequence and they will once again be vanquished. God is with the believers.



Readers may proceed now to study the verses.

Text and Translation

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِآلِفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَوِّفِينَ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢﴾ إِذْ يُعَشِّيكُمُ النَّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَ بِكُمْ بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رَجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ ﴿٣﴾ إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ سَالِفِينَ قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَأَصْرَبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَغْنَاقِ وَأَصْرَبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ﴿٤﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥﴾ ذَلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا وَآلَ الْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابُ النَّارِ ﴿٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَحْفًا فَلَا تُولُوهُمْ الْاُدْبَارَ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَنْ يُؤْلِهِمْ يَرْجِئْهُمُ اللَّهُ لِيُفْتَلِّحُوا فِيهِمْ فَتَقْذِبَ بَاءً بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا أَوْهَ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَبُئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٨﴾ فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا رَمَيْتُمْ إِذْ رَمَيْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَبِيحٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾ ذَلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ إِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْفَتْحُ ۚ وَإِنْ تَنْتَهُوا فَوَحْيٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعُوذُوا أَعُدَّ ۚ وَلَنْ نُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَتَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١﴾

And remember when you were pleading to your Lord; so, He heard your pleading: I will be sending one thousand angels for your help who will keep coming one after the other. And this was done only that it be a glad tiding for you and that your hearts are reassured through this and help comes from God alone. Indeed, God is powerful and wise. Bear in mind when God makes you doze off from Himself to comfort you and rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan and to strengthen your heart through it and plant your feet. Recall when your Lord sends His revelation to the angels: “I am with you; so keep the believers steadfast. I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers; so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers.” This is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God. So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell. (9-14)

Believers! When as an organized army you fight the disbelievers, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them at that time unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army, then he returned with God’s wrath. His abode is Hell, and very evil is that abode! Thus, you did not slay them; it is, in fact, God Who slew them, and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it to show various aspects of His majesty and to highlight the feats of the believers. Indeed, God sees and hears all. And all this happened in front of you and God shall humble all the intrigues of the disbelievers. If you want a judgement, then the judgement has arrived before you. And if you desist, it is better for you and if you



do it again, We shall also do the same as well. And your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you. And indeed God is with the believers. (15-19)

Explanation

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِآلِفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَوِّفِينَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾

The words *أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ* explain *فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ* and the use of the *fā'il* in it is to express the certainty of God's promise. The word *إرداف* means "to appear one after the other." The verse points to the first instalment of help from God. Muslims were very few in number in this battle. They were only 313 of them and were poorly equipped too. On the other hand, the disbelievers were 1000 in number and were fully equipped with all sorts of weapons. In such circumstances, the sole support which Muslims could have relied upon was that of the Almighty. Thus each and every person became an embodiment of humility. To have an idea of the invocations, one only needs to read the supplication of the Prophet (sws) himself mentioned in ḥadīth narratives. It is obvious that when unarmed Muslims had beseeched the Almighty, how could their supplications have gone unheard? Thus they were accepted and they were given glad tidings from God that they should not feel scared; one thousand angels will be sent by Him to help them. The implication is that they should not fear the one thousand strong army of the enemy; they will have one thousand angels fighting by their side. The way they will appear would be in groups one after the other. This psychology of the combatants should be kept in mind that when they receive help in this consecutive way, their spirits are lifted greatly and the enemy on the other hand is inflicted with fear. This topic has also been brought up in verses 125-126 of Sūrah Āl-'i 'Imrān. Readers can look it up.

In the verse *وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ* the antecedent of the pronoun is the promise of help mentioned earlier. The implication is that if at this instant their Lord had made a promise to them beforehand to help them, then this was purely because they were scared and thus they would receive strength from it and their hearts would receive assurance. Also, they must not think from this that God's help was merely reserved for this occasion. The fact is that whenever believers will go out to wage war for His cause and sincerely seek His help, they will be provided help whether they received glad tidings of this help beforehand or not. This explanation was necessary because in explicit words and at the time it was needed, this promise for divine help

8. And remember when you were pleading to your Lord; so, He heard your pleading: I will be sending one thousand angels for your help who will keep coming one after the other. And this was done only that it be a glad tidings for you and that your hearts are reassured through this and help comes from God alone. Indeed, God is powerful and wise.



could only have been through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) and in his presence; how could the believers receive assurance from it in his absence or when he had passed away. To remove this doubt, it was said that this promise is not merely related to this instance; it is an eternal one for the believers.

The words “and help comes from God alone; indeed, God is powerful and wise” imply that help always comes or will come from God. Thus, those who trust God, trust Him only. He will always help them. He is powerful and dominant and no one can dare stop Him from fulfilling His intent; however, at the same time, He is also wise. Thus if some calamity befalls the believers at some instance, there is some wisdom in it and there is some well-being of His servants hidden in it. This topic too has been discussed in Sūrah Āl-I ‘Imrān while the causes of defeat were being stated.

Some people devoid of insight in current times have opined that this promise was merely to encourage the believers so that they should show courage and fight the disbelievers. In their opinion, after the battle, the Qur’ān revealed this secret that this was said to assure them and it was not something that actually happened. In other words, God forbid, this was a deception by God and later He revealed His own secret. This is so unbecoming a thought to be even entertained.

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُم رَجَزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ⁹

This is the second way in which God helped the believers and refers to the night before the battle. The indefinite tense is used to portray the situation. The sleep has been ascribed to God because it is purely because of His help that it became possible for a handful of people to sleep at night when they were facing a huge army. A very small worry can disturb one’s sleep, let alone the huge ordeal Muslims were encountering at that time. However, those who receive assurance from God can even sleep at their place of execution. Thus Muslims were able to fully rest and became fresh for the battle. I have written under verse 154 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān that sleeping in the battlefield on such occasions is, in the first place, a great blessing but a greater blessing is to *benefit* from it on such occasions. This is because it is not merely sufficient to get an opportunity to sleep; it actually depends on the state of the mind and not every one can achieve peace of mind. Only those are able to reap its blessings on whom God, the Changer of Hearts, grants this comfort from His own grace.

People have generally understood this verse to mean that Muslims slept right at the time when the battle was raging and they were so overcome by it that their swords

9. Bear in mind when God makes you doze off from Himself to comfort you and rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan and to strengthen your heart through it and plant your feet.



would drop to the ground. However, this interpretation is incomprehensible. In the first place, it seems so strange that the Almighty regard that thing to be gift for the Muslims which actually benefits the disbelievers. What more could they have asked for if right at the time of battle Muslims were overcome by sleep however much short its period may be. Secondly, this interpretation is totally against the Qur'ān. This sleep has been mentioned twice in it. The first is in verse 154 of Sūrah Āli-i 'Imrān and the second is in the verse under discussion here. At the former instance, the words used are: ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمْعَةً نَعَّاسًا يَغْشَى طَآئِفَةً مِنْكُمْ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ (then, after this sorrow, God once again let peace descend upon you in the form of a sleep which was overtaking some of you and there were some who were fearing for their lives). In this verse, the “sorrow” mentioned is obviously the one they were inflicted with because of their defeat in the battle of Uhud. So, when they slept after this sorrow, how can this refer to their sleeping during the battle? This could have only happened after the battle. I have discussed this chance of getting sleep and its significance in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Āli-i 'Imrān in detail.

In the verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl under discussion, sleep is mentioned as a help from God that appeared before the start of the battle. Prior to this the glad tidings of the descent of angels were mentioned. Obviously, these glad tidings were given before the battle. The subsequent part of the verse mentions the arrival of rain. Everyone knows that it rained also before the battle. So in between these two, how can something that occurred during the battle be mentioned? In the very sequence of its mention, the Qur'ān has very aptly referred to the whole incident. But the problem is that people seldom reflect on the Qur'ān.

A doubt that may possibly come to mind is that the Qur'ān has used the word نَعَّاس which is used in Arabic for the initial sleep which is not deep; a more apt word for peaceful and deep sleep is نوم. In my opinion, this doubt does not carry any weight. In the first place, at instances of intense worry, it is this initial sleep that one becomes deprived of. If somehow a person can manage it, and is able to doze of a little, he does get some sleep. By His special blessing, God covered the believers with sleep, as is evident from the word يَغْشَىكُمْ. So they were able to sleep. In the second place, in the battlefield or during a journey no responsible person sleeps like a log. At such instances, a person does not sleep deeply. Thus the word used by the Qur'ān is very apt.

The third help provided by God is mentioned thus “[He] rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan.” Here the words “from the heavens” are very meaningful. It is evident from historical reports that the disbelievers had advanced first and took hold of the fountain. Thus, Muslims were faced with a great apprehension regarding water. By using the words “from the heavens” God assured them that the disbelievers would not be able to deprive them of water because of their evil machination. God is there to help them.



The benefit of water mentioned in “so that He may purify you through it” also reflects the taste of the Prophet’s companions. Faith had changed their values. The fact that a thirsty person needs water is its benefit that every person knows. Even animals are aware of it. In the eyes of the believer, the real benefit of water is that it is a means of purification and cleansing and also a means of warding off the whisperings of Satan. This thing is very dear to God. The companions must have deliberated that more than its need to drink, water was needed to do ablutions and to ceremonially clean themselves after urination and defecation. Similarly, if they needed to take a bath, how would they be able to do so? Thus God specially mentioned these spiritual benefits of water and did not refer its other uses that a body requires because everyone knows them.

Specially mentioned are also “the whisperings of Satan.” Just as flies tend to hover over filth, the whisperings of Satan also increase when a person is unclean. Some Ḥadīth narratives also mention this fact. Moreover, if there is a chance that water may become scarce and that too in a battlefield, Satan can cash on this opportunity to create such despair and despondency that that faith of many may be shaken.

Consider next: رَبِّطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ. The expression ربط الله على قلبه means that God strengthened his heart and gave him assurance. Generally people have subsumed this under rain. In other words, they contend that it was because of rain that their hearts were strengthened and their feet were planted. However, I am more inclined to say that these are actually the benefits of the sleep mentioned earlier. Following are the reasons of my view.

In the first place, the repetition of ل in يَرْبِطَ is an indication that it cannot be under لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ وَيَذْهَبَ عَنْكُمْ رَجَزَ الشَّيْطَانِ. Had this been so, ل would not have been repeated as it is not in the case of يَذْهَبَ. This style is common in eloquent Arabic. Parallels from the Qur’ān and classical Arabic reinforce this. Examples of this can be seen earlier in this *tafsīr*. Thus in verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah it is said: يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ (God desires ease for you and not discomfort. And so that you can complete the fasts and the guidance God has bestowed upon you, you glorify God and express your gratitude to Him). While explaining this verse, I have written that it describes the individual reasons for the directives mentioned earlier. For this reason, each begins with the letter ل and an ascending order sequence is adopted. The purpose of each and every directive is elucidated. On the same principle, the sequence in the verse under discussion is also ascending in nature. Water is mentioned at the end. So first its benefit has been stated first. The benefit of sleep is then stated, as sleep was mentioned first. The letter ل is repeated in يَرْبِطَ after earlier mentioning it in لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ so it become evident that يَرْبِطَ is connected to sleep.

Secondly, peace of mind and heart are clearly related to sleep. For this reason, the Qur’ān has called sleep as أَمْنَةً. It is a fact that if the night is spent in worry and restlessness, the mind loses its focus. If a person wants to go in one direction, he ends



up doing in another. In this state of mental consternation, a person is not able to do even a small task in the proper way, let alone fighting a battle and that too with his nerves and physical strength and not with the sophisticated machinery of today. It may also be kept in mind that many classical Arabic poets, while stating their military feats, say that they did not let their enemy sleep at night, as a result of which they have not been able to fight against them with grit and resolve.

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنْ مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَالَتْنِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَغْنَاقِ وَ
اضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۖ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٧٧﴾ ذِكْرُكُمْ
فَذَوْقُوهُ وَأَنَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٧٨﴾¹⁰

The angels referred to here are the ones about whose arrival tidings were given earlier. This army of angels was directly under the command of God and thus it received all its directives directly from Him. The source of these directives was divine revelations sent to them because angels too, in spite of their exalted status, do not have direct access to God.

The first directive given to the army was that since God was with them, they must build resolve in the believers. One thing which is evident from this is that without God's accompaniment, even angels can do nothing. The second thing that becomes evident is that even the angels do not ask the believers to step away so that they will fight on their behalf; on the contrary, their responsibility is to keep the believers steadfast and build their morale. In other words, the real thing is the resolve and steadfastness of the believers themselves. If they display this, they will receive God's help. It is God's established practice that He helps those who first do their due.

Thus the words "I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers" imply that once the believers do what they are required to do, God will play His part. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the real strength of an army lies in its morale. If this morale is intact, a soldier can even fight without weapons and if he loses it, the whole army runs away from the battlefield leaving behind all its ammunition for the enemy. Thus striking awe in their hearts is no ordinary a thing; it signifies breaking the back of the enemy.

The words "so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers" depict the consequence of being awe-stricken. It depicts their utter helplessness. As long as an enemy soldier has courage left, he seldom gives a chance to anyone to hit him

10. Recall when your Lord sends His revelation to the angels: "I am with you; so keep the believers steadfast. I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers; so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers." This is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God. So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell.



anywhere he wants. But when he loses resolve and courage, he becomes a sitting duck. When it is asked to strike someone at specific parts of his body, the purpose is to humiliate him and also to point to his helplessness.

The words “this is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God” states the reason for God striking awe in their hearts and why they will be totally decimated by the believers. No justification exists in human nature to fight against God and His Messenger. Such a justification only exists when a person wants to safeguard a certain right he has and only in this situation does the courage to fight builds up in him. Obviously, no such thing is found in the case of God. For this reason, those who take up this foolish undertaking may show great resolve for a battle; however, when they enter the contest, they are crushed because their courage has no basis.

Consider now the last part: “So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell.” Earlier, the believers were addressed. Now in between, the Quraysh are addressed here. It is an explanation of the stern punishment of God mentioned earlier. In other words, their retribution from God will not end in this world; its real place is Hell for which they must wait.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحَفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمْ الْأَدْبَارَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُؤَلِّمِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ بُرَّةً إِلَّا مَتَحَرِّيًا لِقَاتِلٍ
أَوْ مَتَحَرِّيًا إِلَى فِتْنَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبَشَسَ الْبَصِيرُ ۖ ۝۱۱

The word زَحَف means to walk slowly or to walk about on the knees. From here, this word began to be used for a well-equipped and heavily armed army that goes out to fight a battle because it too marches slowly. It may be kept in mind that this usage of the word is not related to today when armies are equipped with heavy machines; it relates to that period when armies would advance on horses, mules and camels.

Two types of warfare were common in Arabia: one was through an organized army attack and the other is what is called guerrilla warfare in current times. The latter meant that an attack would be launched, assets of the enemy would be looted and then the attackers would run away. For this purpose, small contingents would be used and would suddenly launch an onslaught on the enemy and then withdraw to their retreats. There was no fixed principle for this. Anything that could earn success would be adopted.

The matter of attacking through an organized army was very different. It was governed by a principle that was to be abided by both the warring battalions when

11. Believers! When as an organized army you fight the disbelievers, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them at that time unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army, then he returned with God's wrath. His abode is Hell, and very evil is that abode!



they met as well as the armies at their back. The verse refers to this type of warfare. Thus to express it, the word رُحْفًا is used so that it becomes evident that it does not refer to guerrilla warfare.

In these verses, the believers are being given guidance regarding future battles they will be fighting. This directive of not showing their backs when the battle is in the form of an organized army attack is a requirement of God's help mentioned earlier: it is forbidden for those who have God and His angels in their support to turn their backs. Those who do so will earn the wrath of God and Hell shall be their abode. It is evident from this that this crime is equal to disbelief and apostasy. Obviously the reason for the intensity of this crime is because a person who runs away from the battlefield at times because of this cowardliness becomes a threat for the whole army, in fact, for the whole community.

The only exception to this is stated thus “unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army.” In other words, what is forbidden is to show one's back to run away from the battlefield.

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتُمْ إِذْ رَمَيْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءٌ حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ ذَلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنٌ كَيْدِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

The words “you did not slay them” are addressed to common Muslims and the “and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it” are addressed to the Prophet (sws). For this reason, the former are expressed in the plural in Arabic and the latter in the singular. The word رَمَى has different connotations. They include “to throw an arrow from a bow”, “to throw pebbles” and “to throw dust and embers.” It is mentioned in narratives that when the two armies met, the Prophet (sws) picked up a handful of dust and while saying شأهت الوجوه threw it towards the disbelievers. This expression signifies a curse in Arabic and since ancient times throwing dust towards someone meant cursing him. This is mentioned in the Torah also and is also found in Arab traditions. Ustādh Farāhī has given its references in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Fīl.¹³

Here a linguistic style must be kept in mind: at times, the negation of a verb is not meant for its negation but a negation of the ascription of the grand consequences which manifested themselves in the wake of the verb: decimating the armour-clad armies of the Quraysh by a handful of Muslims or the transformation of a handful of dust thrown by the Prophet (sws) into a dust-storm that blinded all the disbelievers – all these were not the feats of the blood-stained swords of the Muslims or the throw of

12. Thus, you did not slay them; it is, in fact, God Who slew them, and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it to show various aspects of His majesty and to highlight the feats of the believers. Indeed, God sees and hears all. And all this happened in front of you and God shall humble all the intrigues of the disbelievers.

13. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 401-402.



the Prophet (sws). These were in fact feats of God's help that was concealed in the sheaths of the Muslims and in the arm the Prophet (sws).

The expression أبلى فلان في الحرب بلاء حسنا means “he showed great feats of bravery and valour in the battlefield, so much so that everyone acknowledged his mastery. The expression أبلى الله عباده بلاء حسنا means “God made their feats prominent.”

The copulative clause (*ma'tūf 'alayh*) of وَلِيُبَيِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلََاءَ حَسَنًا is suppressed as per linguistic principles because it is self-evident from these words. If this suppression is unfolded, the whole verse would mean “so that God shows the majesty of His help and make the feats of the believers fully prominent.”

The attributes of hearing and knowledge of God mentioned here are meant to assure the believers that He is aware of everything. He hears the invocations and supplications of His servants all the time and knows their essential needs too. His help in the battle of Badr is the latest testimony to this.

Consider next the sentence ذِكْرُكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُؤَيَّدٌ بِكَيْدِ الْكَافِرِينَ. When the word ذِكْرُكُمْ occurs like this it takes the place of a whole sentence, and the copulative particle وَ ahead relates to the meaning concealed in it. The implication is that these instances of help that have manifested for the believers are the immediate ones; moreover, God will make the plans of the disbelievers end up fruitless. This sentence occurs in exact parallel to verse 14: ذِكْرُكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ. In other words, this is an immediate reversal suffered by the disbelievers at Badr and for the believers it is a great victory that they have notched up. Now, it is Hell that awaits the disbelievers and for the believers are the glad tidings that all the conspiracies of the disbelievers will utterly fail and the religion of truth shall triumph.

It is evident from the word كَيْدٌ (an intrigue) that the battle of Badr was not the result of any initiative from the believers. It emanated from the conspiracies of the leaders of the Quraysh. They fabricated the excuse of protecting the trade caravan and attacked the Muslims but, as shall become evident from verse 42, the Almighty informed the Prophet (sws) in time and the Muslims got prepared to defend themselves. It is for this reason that the Qur'an has called it “an intrigue.” It will become evident from verse 48 ahead that the Jews were also a part of this intrigue.

After an explanation of the components of the verses, readers may also now take a look at their context. Earlier, the believers were invited to show valour and bravery in the battle. Its reason has been cited in these verses: why should they be hesitant and turn their backs when it is not they who are waging war; it is, in fact, God Who is fighting on their behalf; it is He Who fights but He also provides an opportunity to Muslims to show feats of valour and obtain success both in this world and the next.

إِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْفَتْحُ ۖ وَإِنْ تَنْتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا لِّلْعَدُوِّ ۖ وَلَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَنْ



كَثُرْتُ^{١٤} وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

This verse directly addresses the believers. It may be kept in mind that at this instance, inebriated with their large number, the leaders of the Quraysh delivered vehement speeches one after the other. Since they were fully convinced of their victory, they regarded this battle to be a decisive barometer between truth and falsehood. They contended that they would whole-heartedly accept whatever verdict this battle gives. Abū Jahal was the most active in instigating the battle. He is reported to have uttered this invocation (Lord! Destroy the one among us who is the most guilty of breaking familial ties). It was because of this arrogance of the Quraysh that the Qur'ān has stated in this verse that the verdict they were waiting for has arrived. In verse 41 ahead, the Qur'ān has called it *يَوْمَ الْقُرْآنِ* (the day of verdict) for this very reason. It will also become from verse 32 ahead that the Quraysh would stubbornly contend that if Muḥammad's message has truth in it, let God hurl stones on them or some punishment visit them, after which they will believe in him.

The words “and if you desist, it is better for you” are both a council and a rebuke. The implication is that it is better that they learn a lesson from the outcome of this battle. If they do not, then they should remember that they will not harm God in any way; they will only call for their own doom. The subsequent words “We shall also do the same as well” form an open threat and so do the ones following them “and your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you.” If they are more in number, the inferno of God will burn even more, as they will act as its firewood.

The last part “and indeed God is with the believers” is the real soul of this whole verse and these few words contain a whole world of threats for the disbelievers and glad tidings for the believers. It says that whoever wants to come and fight should come now and gather as many people as he can in support; God's support lies with the believers! May God be praised.

Section III: Verses (20-28)

The ongoing subject of instructing, purifying and reforming the believers continues with its gradual revelations in the succeeding verses. The believers whose weaknesses are the cause of what is said are openly threatened. Moreover, the Muslims society as a whole is also informed that it should be on guard. Good and evil both are found in the society. If some people tried to spread some mischief in the society and others did not try to stop them, then ultimately this mischief will embrace everyone whether

14. If you want a judgement, then the judgement has arrived before you. And if you desist, it is better for you and if you do it again, We shall also do the same as well. And your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you. And indeed God is with the believers.



good or bad. The believers are urged to not follow the ways of the Jews who would claim before their messenger that they accepted when, in fact, they had not. Muḥammad (sws) is inviting them to true life. They should whole-heartedly follow it. Those who do not open their hearts to his preaching even after listening to it and understanding it will find the law of God become a barrier between them and their hearts. After that, these hearts are sealed forever.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الضُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُخْشَعُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاتَّقُوا فَتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمْتُمْ مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ ۚ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمْنَتَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا آمَاكُمُ وَأَوْلَاكُمُ فَتْنَةٌ ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

Believers! Obey God and His Messenger and do not evade his call when you are listening. And be not like those who claim: “We listened,” but they never listened. Before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect. And had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion. (20-23)

Believers! Respond to the call of God and the Messenger when the Messenger is inviting you to that which gives life to you and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone. And keep fearing the trial with which the wrongdoers only shall not be afflicted and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution. (24-25)

And recall when you were small in number and weak in the land; you would fear that people might get hold of you. Then God gave you refuge and blessed you with His help and granted you noble sustenance so that you may be grateful. Believers! Do not be insincere to God and His Messenger and do not be deliberately dishonest in what is entrusted to you. And bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial and that great reward lies with God alone. (26-28)

**Explanation**

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنَّهُ وَ أَنْتُمْ تَسْعَوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَبَعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْعَوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الضُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْعَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ
 أَسْعَهُمْ لَنَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٨﴾¹⁵

The address in the opening words is though general in nature but it is directed to weak Muslims and the believers who are under mention since the beginning. This is a common style of the Qur’ān in which such elements are warned in an indirect way so that they are not humiliated and also they are provided with an opportunity to mend their ways. As for the good ones, they nevertheless do benefit from it. In other words, the mistakes of others provide them with a further chance to increase their knowledge and polish their deeds.

The verb “obey” is used in the verse in its ultimate sense. The actual meaning would be that believers should obey God and His prophet in the most befitting way that is entailed by their faith. The words “when you are listening” in “and do not evade their call when you are listening” point to the grave nature of their attitude. In words, what will become of them in future, if they stumble in the presence of the messenger? Those who fall down in broad daylight have no excuse for this fall. The antecedent of the pronoun in *عَنْهُ* is the Messenger though earlier both God and the Messenger are mentioned. It is evident from this that evading the Messenger is tantamount to evading God: the only means to connect with God and to obey Him is through His messenger.

Everyone who is a connoisseur of the Qur’ān knows that the words “and be not like those who claim: ‘We listened’ but they never listened” refer to the Jews. In Sūrah al-Baqarah (verse 93), the Qur’ān has clearly stated that the Jews would say “we listen and we obey” and whereas actually their attitude reflected “we listen and we do not obey.” The Qur’ān has also specified that this attitude was in the presence of the Prophet (sws). In other words, it is insinuated to these hypocritical Muslims that this behaviour they have adopted is not in consonance with obeying the Messenger; it is akin to obeying the Jews. If they lay claim to faith, they must not follow the ways of this nation that has earned God’s wrath.

Though the harshness in the tone was evident in the previous part of the verse, it has become very evident from “before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect.” The implication is that if even after hearing they do not listen or use their intellect and also do not follow what the Prophet (sws) says,

15. Believers! Obey God and His Messenger and do not evade his call when you are listening. And be not like those who claim: “We listened,” but they never listened. Before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect. And had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion.



then in the sight of God they are the worst of animals. At several instances, the Qur'ān has called Idolaters as well as the Jews and the Christians as the worst of animals because they had refused to listen and understand. Obviously, the group which will follow their ways will be regarded among them. It has been mentioned elsewhere that the real distinguishing feature of a human being is his faculty of intellect. Without it, he becomes a two legged beast and that too the worst. This is because an animal however bad it may be still follows its instinct. This has its own utility in its background. However, if a human being loses this distinguishing feature, then even Satan accepts defeat before him. On the other hand, if he uses his intellect and insight, he climbs the highest of summits, and if he is without it, he plunges into the deepest of pits.

The words “and had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion” are meant to dispel a doubt that may arise forthwith: if a such is the importance of this faculty and such is the dislike of God when a person does not use it that he becomes worse than an animal, then why does not God use His power to open his mind and heart and revive his intellect? The answer is that had He found this ability in them, He would definitely have provided them the urge to understand. Since, this was not the case, He never did so. This actually is a reference to God's established practice of providing guidance to human beings: He has provided every person the ability to distinguish good from evil. Those who keep this ability intact and use it are guided further and they gradually develop in knowledge and deeds. On the other hand, those who waste this natural ability endowed to them by their creator, then per this practice, whatever guidance they already have is also taken away, let alone being given new one. Jesus (sws) while referring to this fact has very subtly said: Why would a master trust a slave with a thousand coins if he has proven dishonest in one coin.

So if God had injected guidance in them without this ability, their natures would have repelled it and it would not have found roots in them. Food may have the ability to provide nourishment; however, if the stomach is not functioning, it will not accept it. If something is ingested, it would be soon thrown up. Similarly, for the development of a plant, it is not just its healthy seed that is needed; also needed is a ground that has the ability to make it grow. If a farmer sows the seeds of the best of plants in a barren piece of land, it will not prosper beyond a few days. It will wither away because it will not receive the required nourishment. Precisely same is the case with the seed of virtue and vice. It develops according to its potentials only in those human natures which are upright. If this upright nature becomes corrupt, a seed can still be planted by in it by God but it is God's law too that it will not develop.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ ۚ وَأَنَّهُ



إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

It has been mentioned earlier that the distinguishing feature of a human being is his insight and intellect and real life is the life of his heart and his soul. If he loses the ability to contemplate the truth and refuses to accept it, he is actually dead with respect to his purpose of creation. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has called the disbelievers as dead. The call of God and His Messenger is the call towards real life. It is only by accepting it that sight is blessed with insight and intellect receives the light that unveils for it the secrets of the world around him. Through it, the heart receives the life which transforms a lump of meat into a repository of divine disclosures. It is precisely while referring to this fact that Jesus is reported to have said: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew, 4:4)

The words "and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone" form a very harsh warning to those who do not value the vibrant call towards righteousness, especially from a messenger of God and become deaf and dumb. God becoming a barrier here means God's law become a barrier. At times, things that happen because of God's law and practice are ascribed to God Himself. Under verse 7 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, more details can be seen. The implication is that the hearts of these people run amok and can never be controlled. When a person starts to indulge in vices, then until a certain limit he can still turn back if he pays heed; however, when this limit is crossed and he does not have the urge to control and discipline his heart, then he becomes helpless before it. The call of a messenger, as is mentioned earlier, is the most effective call to open the eyes, ears and hearts. Thus, those who turn away from this call, are subjected to this law of God as per which their hearts are sealed.

In this verse, the Qur'ān has actually warned weak and hypocritical Muslims. They are told that they still have the time to mend their ways. Otherwise, their hearts will be sealed. They will be tarnished to such an extent that it they will never be able to regain their lustre. Moreover, they must also remember that this situation is not going to be just confined to this world; one day they will have to face God and therefore they must think about its consequences too.

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٧﴾

This verse addresses the whole society in general and those elements in particular who were more concerned to reform their own selves and did not have much concern

16. Believers! Respond to the call of God and the Messenger when the Messenger is inviting you to that which gives life to you and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone.

17. And keep fearing the trial with which the wrongdoers only shall not be afflicted and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution.



about how others behave. It is such people who are shaken and jolted. They are told that they must not remain indifferent to evils found in their society. They should try their best to set them right because if some evil deed becomes rampant in a society, it becomes an endemic. In such a case, its evil effects are not merely to confined to its perpetrators; they also engulf those who remained silent and indifferent to it.

The Prophet (sws) has explained this fact through the parable of the travellers of a ship: consider a ship which houses some travellers on its deck and some below the deck; the ones living below the deck thinking that they would have to bear the hardship to go on the deck to fetch water start digging a hole in its lower part; however, the ones living on the deck remain indifferent to this act, then the ship is bound to sink because of what the ones below the deck are doing.

For this reason, it has been made an obligation on people by the religion of God to stop others from evil. The Prophet is reported to have said: “When any person among you sees an evil [in his circle of authority], he should try to curb it by [the force of] his hands. If he does not have the faith to do it, he should try to curb it by his tongue and if [even] this is not possible, he should consider it bad in his heart and this is the lowest level of faith.” (Muslim, vol. 1, 69, (no. 49))

It we study the context of this verse, it becomes evident that there was one group who claimed to accept the truth through their tongues but did not have the strength to fulfil its demands. It is for such people that it was said that if they do not mend their affairs, the law of God becomes a barrier between them and their hearts. The second group was the one that accepted the truth but they do not have so much attachment to it so as to bear the anger of others for its cause. These people were warned that if some vice spreads in a society, then even they themselves will not be protected from its evil consequences. Only they will remain protected who will continue to enjoin righteousness as far as possible regardless of whether anyone listens to them or not and whether anyone is happy with them or not.

The words “and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution” refers to the unbiased and relentless nature of the law of retribution. In other words, just as the laws of God are relentless in the physical realm, they are inexorable in the moral realm too. Just as a person who breathes in an impure atmosphere is influenced by it if he does not take the necessary precautionary measures, similarly a person living in bad company comes under its influence, if he does not keep in consideration the afore-mentioned conditions. In this matter, the law of God is the same for all and is impartial too.

وَإِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَفَّكُمْ النَّاسُ فَأَوَكُّمُ وَيَايَكُمُ يَنْصَرِيهِ وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ¹⁸

18. And recall when you were small in number and weak in the land; you would fear that people might get hold of you. Then God gave you refuge and blessed you with His help and



The obedience to God and His Messenger with which this discourse began is reinforced here. This is done by God recounting his favours. The purpose is to make them realize that the God and His Messenger who are inviting them towards the truth have helped them at every step in the past. All these favours entail that they show gratitude to God and become useful members of His religion. They should not fear any danger that they may encounter on this path. He Who has dealt with them in such a befitting way in the past will continue to help them in the future also.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمْنَتَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ
فِتْنَةٌ ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَ أَجْرٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

This verse is in exact parallel to the directive which is mentioned in verse 24. What is said in an affirmative way in that verse is stated here such that people are stopped from indulging in its opposite. Moreover, the obligation of gratitude mentioned earlier must be kept in mind and must becoming ungrateful should be abstained from. It must be kept in mind that the real essence of gratitude is to recognize the right of God, to acknowledge it and to fulfil it with sincerity. The obvious requisite of this is that a person must not be insincere to God and His Messenger after pledging obedience to them. He should always fulfil this promise because every promise is a trust and it is dishonesty to breach it, whether openly or secretly.

The style adopted in لَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ is the same as in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: لَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (do not mix truth with falsehood and hide the truth deliberately). It was shown there that if the particle of negation is not repeated, it is an indication that hiding of the truth is a natural consequence of mixing truth and falsehood. Similar, is the case here. Though this sentence is governed by the particle of negation in لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ but this particle has not been repeated in it. It is evident from this that it is insincerity with God and His Messenger that opens the way to insincerity with people with regard to responsibilities and trusts.

The word أَمَانَت has been discussed in detail in verse 58 of Sūrah al-Nisā' that it is mentioned in the Qur'ān in a very broad meaning. Included in its connotation are all rights and responsibilities whether they are imposed because of some covenant or logically and naturally come under them as well as all potentials and favours with which human beings are blessed with. It is said that these trusts should not be deliberately breached.

The condition “deliberately” is meant to reprimand people who are referred to here.

granted you noble sustenance so that you may be grateful.

19. Believers! Do not be insincere to God and His Messenger and do not be deliberately dishonest in what is entrusted to you. And bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial and that great reward lies with God alone.



However, it is a separate fact that an act becomes a crime in the eyes of God when it is done intentionally after knowing that it is wrong.

The words “and bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial” point to the real ailment in this regard and why people become slack in their obedience to God and His Messenger. When the love of wealth and children prevails on a person to the extent that he begins to shirk responsibilities and evade obligations related to the being Who actually blessed them with wealth and children, then the latter become a trial.

It is the over-blown love of wealth and children that lies at the base of insincerity with God and His messenger and in shirking the responsibilities owed to others. Viewed thus, it is the largest door that leads to hypocrisy. Precisely for this reason, wealth and children are called a trial. The way to protect one’s self from this trial is that a person keeps in remembrance that great reward which God has preserved for those who are not insincere to Him and His Messenger because of love and wealth. In fact, if there is a clash at some instance between earning the pleasure of God and His messenger and between love for wealth and children, they give preference to the former. Thus, it is stated that for such people there is a great reward.

Section IV: Verses (29-40)

In this section, first the believers are encouraged. They are told that if they resolutely abide by their promise with God and not show weakness by being overcome with the love for wealth and children, then soon the time will come when He will make the *furqān* manifest itself for them. At the same time, all veils which are today blocking the truth from becoming evident to them will be lifted.

After that, the effective scheme of God is referred to which He employed to save His messenger from the unanimous conspiracy of the disbelievers and to open his way for migration. This migration became the prelude to the dominance of Islam and a decisive step in the contest between truth and evil. Until then, the disbelievers were making fun of the warnings sounded by the Qur’ān. They used to say that if the preaching of the Prophet (sws) is from God, why does He not punish them for not accepting it? The reason that this does not happen is that as long as a Messenger remains among his people, God does not send any punishment to them. However, once this happens and the Messenger and his companions migrate from these people, no such restriction remains.

After this, reasons which have made the disbelievers worthy of punishment are stated. They think that it is because of their efforts that God’s religion is rooted in the society. They conceitedly think that they are the custodians of the House of God and also observe religious practices. It is said that time has come that this arrogance of theirs shall see its end. Soon the efforts they are undertaking to stop people from



God's religion and to defeat it will become a yearning from them. They will be defeated in this world and in the Hereafter God will gather them and throw them into Hell.

At the end, the Quraysh are warned: it is better if they change their ways and accept the Prophet's message; otherwise, they should remember that they will encounter the same fate as the one encountered by those who earlier denied their messengers. At the same time, the believers are directed to continue to wage war against them until the persecution they are guilty of is done away with and no religion except that of God remains in the land. God will help and support them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَإِذْ يُنَادِيَنَّكَ الدِّينُ الْكَفَرُ وَالْيَشْرُوتُكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ وَيُنَادِيَنَّكَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ الْبَكْرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَإِذْ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ يُسَىٰ وَابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِئًا مِّنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ هَٰذَا نَبَأُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمُوسَىٰ إِذَا أَوَدْتَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ فَإِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْرِجَنَّكَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ أَوْ يُضَرِّبُكَ إِلَى جَنَّةِ عَدْنٍ ۖ فَيُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُوسَىٰ أَنْ يَسْتَعْجِلَ مِنَ الْمَلَكِ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَبَارَأَنِي مِنَ الْمَرْءِ الْمَخْلُوقِ ﴿٤٠﴾

Believers! If you keep fearing God, He will manifest the *furqān* for you, brush away your sins from you and pardon you. And God is immensely bountiful. Bear in mind the time when the disbelievers were conspiring in your matter: to imprison you or slay you or banish you. They were conspiring and God was also making His scheme and God is the best of schemers. (29-30)

And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: "We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients." And remember when they said: "God! If this is the truth from you, hurl down stones on us from the heavens or bring upon us some other painful punishment.



And God would not have punished them when you were among them. And God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness. And why should He not punish them when they stop [people] from the Sacred Mosque, even though they are also not its custodians. Its custodians can only be those who fear God. But most of them do not know this fact. And their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping. So, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of. (31-35)

Those who are guilty of disbelief are spending their wealth to stop [people] from the path of God. They will be spending it; then it will become a yearning for them. Then they will be vanquished and these disbelievers will be gathered and driven towards Hell so that God may separate the pure from the impure and heap the impure over the impure; then cast this heap into Hell. It is these people who shall end up as losers. (36-37)

Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed. And keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God. Thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do. And if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian. What a wonderful guardian and what a good helper. (38-40)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ٢٠

“*Furqān*” means everything which distinguishes good from evil. This distinguishing thing can be internal as well as external and also ideological and intellectual. Moreover, it can also be an event and something practical. In verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the Qur’ān also regards proofs and arguments to be “*furqān*” because through them it distinguishes good from evil. For the Qur’ān and of the real Torah also, this word has been used at more than one instance for precisely the same reason. Similarly, in verse 41 of this *sūrah* the battle Badr is regarded as “*furqān*” because this battle showed who was on the right and who on the wrong.

In the verse under discussion, the believers are being promised that if they strongly adhere to a God-fearing attitude, which in other words means that they are not insincere to God and His Messenger, then God will soon make the truth prevail. The clouds of doubt that at the moment loom will be steered away and the truth will shine in such a way that it will daze the eyes of the enemy. Concomitant indications show that here the word “*furqān*” is referring to the dominance of Islam and the Muslims. Though one “*furqān*” had already appeared in the battle of Badr before the Muslims,

20. Believers! If you keep fearing God, He will manifest the *furqān* for you, brush away your sins from you and pardon you. And God is immensely bountiful.



forces of evil were still present all around them. For this reason, one of their groups was inflicted with doubt and reluctance and it was this reluctance that would in turn inflict them with the weaknesses mentioned earlier. The verse actually addresses such reluctant Muslims.

The word سَيِّئَاتِ refers to minor sins which people are prone to as human beings. In other words, if people do not commit major sins, God will not hold them accountable for minor ones because He is a very gracious.

وَاذْيُبْكُم بِاللَّيْلِ كَافِرًا يَلْبِسُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُغْرِبُكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ الْمُنْظِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

The literal meaning of أَثْبَات is “to stop someone” and “to restrict someone” which also includes “to imprison someone.”

This is a reference to the conspiracy hatched by the Quraysh at the Dār al-Nadwah to uproot forthwith the preaching endeavour of the Prophet (sws). Different leaders presented different suggestions. It is evident from books of history and biographies of the Prophet (sws) that after discussion the suggestion to kill him was adopted. The strategy adopted for this was that all the families of the Quraysh would participate so that the Prophet’s family does not have the courage to demand *qisās*.

The word مَكْر has been discussed in detail in verse 54 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. I had explained there what it means when it is spoken with reference to God. One aspect of God being the best of schemers is that His scheme always prevails on others. The second aspect is that though the enemy may regard this scheme to be its victory, it ultimately culminates in opening many doors of victory of the truth. The best example of this is the incident of migration. The Quraysh heaved a sigh of relief at the Prophet’s departure but events soon proved that this departure became the prelude to the widespread dissemination of Islam in the free environment of Madīnah and the Quraysh could only helplessly wait for their fate, as will become evident from the verses ahead.

Here the purpose of reminding the believers of this promise was to reinforce the promise of manifestation of the “*furqān*” mentioned in the previous verse. The implication is that if people want to see how God turns unfavourable circumstances into favourable ones, they need not look far. The life of their Prophet (sws) bears its greatest testimony. There was a time when the fate of Islam hung only with the noble Prophet (sws) and his few followers. So the Quraysh decided to kill him and hatched a unanimous conspiracy to achieve this goal. But such was the scheme made by God that the Prophet (sws) deceived his enemy in leaving Makkah and no one could even touch him. Then it was not just the Prophet (sws) who departed, future events showed that the sun of success shone brightly on him and his followers. The Quraysh

21. Bear in mind the time when the disbelievers were conspiring in your matter: to imprison you or slay you or banish you. They were conspiring and God was also making His scheme and God is the best of schemers.



reckoned that the Prophet's (sws) exile to an alien land would sound the death-knell for his message. However, God's measures and plans showed that the most fertile and helpful land for the development of Islam was Madīnah towards which the disbelievers themselves pushed Muslims to go. Thus does God realize His schemes. Enemies think that they have won the battle but in reality it is the strategy of God that succeeds. Whenever He intends, He uses the enemies to accomplish the very task of reaping victory for the truth and destroying the enemy. Ultimately, the truth prevails and the enemy is vanquished. So they should not be scared of the prevailing unfavourable circumstances. They should trust "the best of schemers." From the darkness they are facing soon the dazzling sun of truth will emerge as a "*furqān*."

This verse address the Prophet (sws) as is evident from the words *وَإِذْ يَنْفِرُ بِكَ*. However, with regard to its occasion and meaning, it has two aspects. In one aspect, it is connected with the previous topic and in the other it is a prelude to a forthcoming topic. In this forthcoming topic, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that if until then the Quraysh were demanding punishment and God was ignoring them, then its reason was not that God was helpless. It was because the Prophet (sws) was present among them. However, once he has migrated from them, what can save them from the lash of this punishment? They themselves have deprived themselves of this immunity. Since, at this precarious instance, God wanted to let the Prophet (sws) know of the status he has in His eyes, the Prophet (sws) was directly addressed in deference to eloquence. He should not be sad if they have turned him out because their life-line was in his hands. They will now see how God humiliates them. At the same time, glad tidings of the afore-mentioned "*furqān*" were given.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا نَوْشَاءَ نَقْلُنَا مِثْلَ هَذَا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ
 إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ آتِيَةٍ ۖ ﴿٩٤﴾

The content of this verse has also been discussed in verse 93 of Sūrah al-An'ām. Here these verses occur in a certain background: the Quraysh would continuously challenge God to send punishment and would also arrogantly harass the Prophet (sws); but God did not do so, as a result of which they became even more audacious in their demand. They became even more adamant that their falsehood is actually the truth. Because of their arrogance they failed to understand why they were given respite in spite of asking for punishment. Today they should hear the clear answer to this question.

22. And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: "We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients." And remember when they said: "God! If this is the truth from you, hurl down stones on us from the heavens or bring upon us some other painful punishment.



وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

This is the answer to the question mentioned earlier. Since the purpose here is to specially show affection to the Prophet (sws), he is directly addressed. The verse actually points to the established practice of the Almighty before He sends His punishment to a Messenger's nation: as long as a Messenger is present among his people, he is like their heart. He prays to the Almighty for their forgiveness and also invites them to seek forgiveness. His presence among them shows that they still have signs of life left in them. His message gives life to those who have the ability to accept a life of faith. His seeking of repentance for his nation becomes a shield for them. However much, the miscreants among it spread mischief and however much may they challenge God and His messenger, they are forgiven by the Almighty. If ever He does inflict them with a calamity, it is just to warn them and it is never in the form of a decisive punishment to them. However, when a nation crosses its limits and starts making plans to kill the messenger and the righteous are inflicted with extreme hardships too, the Almighty directs His messenger and his companions to migrate. After that, his nation loses the immunity it formerly enjoyed because of the blessed presence of the messenger and his companions. Thereafter, either of the two situations necessarily arises: if only a few people profess faith in the messenger, the nation is punished directly by God through some natural disaster once the messenger and his companions leave it. Such is the nature of this punishment that it totally wipes out the nation from the face of the earth. This is because to make evil thrive and grow is against the nature of this universe and also against the wisdom of its creator. In the second situation, the people who profess faith in the messenger are substantial in number, as was in the case of Prophet (sws) Muḥammad. A conflict ensues between the righteous and the wrongdoers. Ultimately, evil is totally decimated and vanquished by the truth as is mentioned in verse 81 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl.²⁴

The words “and God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness” imply that even though immunity has been lifted from the Prophet's nation and nothing can save it now, if they still seek forgiveness, God would save them. In other words, the severe warning in the first part of the verse has been slightly reduced in this second part: they still have a chance to salvage themselves. In other words, this is an invitation to the Quraysh to seek forgiveness after they had been warned. In verse 38 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, it has been similarly stated: ^{٢٥}قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَآذَرُ سَلَفٍ ۚ وَإِنْ يَعُودُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

23. And God would not have punished them when you were among them. And God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness.

24. “Truth has arrived and evil has perished; indeed, evil was meant to perish.”

25. Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed.



وَمَا لَهُمْ آلَا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوا أَوْلِيَاءَهُ ۖ إِنْ أُولَٰئِكَ إِلَّا الْمُتَنَفِّسُونَ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءً وَتَصْدِيَةً ۚ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

The style adopted in وَمَا لَهُمْ آلَا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ entails the following meaning: “what eminence do they have that God should not punish them?” This is actually a severe criticism on the arrogance of the Quraysh. This had its roots in their being the custodians of the House of God and observing certain rituals and offering services to the pilgrims. It has been a common misfortune of nations that they distorted God’s religion through their innovations and deviants practices; however, they gave such importance to worshipping these distorted rituals that they regarded themselves to be benefactors of religion and God’s chosen people. They reckoned that when they are doing all these “noble works”, how can they be punished by God? It was this trial with which the Jews were inflicted and the Christians too were overcome with it. The Quraysh also became a prey to it. With great sorrow, I dare say that Satan has got the better of our own *ummah* and subjected them precisely to this trial as well.

The Quraysh thought that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and also hosted and took care of all those pilgrims who visited the House of God. They provided them with food, water and other facilities needed for their stay. What more, they reckoned, was needed to regard themselves to be the favoured and loved ones of God? It was because of this arrogance that the warnings of punishment from the Prophet (sws) weighed down heavily on them. They thought that they were the guardians of the House of God and in turn the House of God was their guardian.

The verse goes on to say that their reliance on being the custodians of the House of God has no basis when their conduct is that they stop people – who are the most worthy visitors of this House – from entering it. They are the ones who are the real adherents to the religion of Abraham (sws) and want to once again cleanse it from polytheism and make the House of God to be the centre of worship of the one true God. The reference is to Muslims who were not just being expelled from this House but also from the city in which it was situated.

The words “even though they are also not its custodians; its custodians can only be those who fear God” negate their claim of being the custodians of the House of God. These words also indicate that these people are dishonest, they are traitors and have violated the sanctity of this House. They have not fulfilled the purpose for which this House was built. Thus they have no right to remain its custodians. They should not pin

26. And why should He not punish them when they stop [people] from the Sacred Mosque, even though they are also not its custodians. Its custodians can only be those who fear God. But most of them do not know this fact. And their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping. So, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of.



any false hope in God in this regard.

At this instance, it should be borne in mind what has been mentioned in verse 144 of Sūrah al-Baqarah when God promised to make Abraham (sws) the leader of a great *ummah*. Thereafter, he asked God if this status would be enjoyed by his *ummah* as well. The rejoinder of the Almighty to this was that His promise was for the righteous among it and not for its wrongdoers. The House of God was regarded as the centre of this leadership. For this reason, after this invocation by Abraham (sws) and God's elucidation, at the very time of building the House of God it was decided that its custodianship and the heirs to the leadership of Abraham's progeny would be only those who adhere to monotheism, who abide by its limits and honour its covenant. They can never be those who have dishonoured the religion of Abraham (sws) and the House of God. Here, readers may keep in mind the words of Jesus (sws) which he said at a similar instance while conversing with the Jewish scholars who claimed to be the custodians of the Bayt al-Maqdis: "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." (Matthew, 21:13)

The words "but most of them do not know this fact" refers to the general state of ignorance of the Arabs in those times. After spending a very long time in the darkness of *jāhiliyyah*, the Ishmaelites had totally forgotten their history. They did remember out of familial superiority that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). Yet beyond this, they had no knowledge as to why Abraham (sws) came to Arabia, what his message was, what were the distinctive features of the religion he taught, why he settled Ishmael (sws) in this land, why the House of God was built here and as a result of association with this House what were the responsibilities and trusts that the Ishmaelites were given. Some cultural traditions and rites of *hajj* that were being carried down from the times of Abraham (sws) were also altered to such an extent that it had become difficult to separate the adulteration from their actual forms. They had made the House of God their national place of worship. Its keys and the responsibility of various departments were transferred within various families. They would take pride in this and in this capacity of theirs administer the House of God. The Qur'ān has referred to this ignorance of theirs that they claimed to be the custodians of the House of God but had no knowledge of the status of God's House and of the requisites of its custodianship

The words "and their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping" portray an example that neither are these people worthy of being the custodians of the House of God nor do they have any knowledge of the purpose for which it was built. The purpose for this Abraham (sws) had built this house has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here, readers may take a look at the following verses of Sūrah Ibrāhīm:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ أَضَلُّونَ كَثِيرًا مِّنْ



النَّاسِ ۚ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي ۚ وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَافِرٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۚ رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بُوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْبَحْرَمِ ۚ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ ۚ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ. (٣٧-٣٥:١٤)

And recall when Abraham prayed: “Lord! Make this land peaceful and protect me and my progeny from worshipping idols. Lord! These idols have led many people astray; so, he who follows me, is from me and he who disobeys me, then You are Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. O Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny near your sacred House in a barren valley; O Our Lord! that they show diligence in the prayer. So, incline the hearts of people towards them and grant them the sustenance of fruits so that they may be grateful to You. (14:35-37)

If one reflects at the words of this invocation, it will become evident why Abraham (sws) had settled Ishmael (sws) in Makkah, what supplication he had made for his progeny and the purpose for which the House of God was built. In particular, the words “that they show diligence in the prayer” bear testimony that just as the House of God was made the centre of worship, the real objective for which the progeny of Ishmael (sws) was settled in its whereabouts was the ritual of the prayer. However, just as the Quraysh turned the House of God into a place of idolatry, similarly, they also violated the sanctity of the prayer – the very reason for which they were made to inhabit this land.

The Qur’ān by very eloquently depicting the outward form of their prayers (clapping and whistling) has clarified that how can such jesting have anything to do with the prayer. It may be noted that to know what is part of religion and what is not, just as there are internal parameters, there are external ones as well. If a person has an insight in religion, he can judge from the outward appearance of religious innovations that such nonsensical things can have nothing to do with religion. For example, one does not need much knowledge to know that mourning rites among Shiites and irreligious practices at shrines and in the gatherings of the Sufis can have no link with religion. A person having a keen eye can easily see this. Every aspect of religion has the reflection of dignity, decency, humility and purity and the fragrance of wisdom, sagacity and spirituality in it. Everyone who has insight and whose spiritual being is alive and vibrant can very easily detect with his senses that a certain act cannot be part of religion. The phases of research and investigation come later and have separate means and sources too. Here the Qur’ān has pointed out that the external form of the prayer of these custodians of the House of God bears witness that it is an invention of Satan. It does not have the slightest reflection of the prayer for which they were made to settle in this land and because of which this House of God was given in their custody.

Uttering sounds from the mouth, whistling and playing music from an instrument all belong to the same category. These things have been part of idolatrous worship rituals



since the very beginning. It is difficult to find out the concept behind them. It may be that these things were used to scare away devils and ghosts. In order to impress upon others their religious leadership, the Quraysh had cleverly placed idols worshipped by all tribes in the House of God and in its vicinity. It is obvious that when these idols came, the rites and rituals to worship them came with them. Ultimately, matters reached the extent that the prayer prescribed by Abraham (sws) was no longer offered in the House of God; so much so, people who knew about it, ceased to exist. All that remained was the foolish practice of whistling and clapping hands.

The first verse: “and why should He not punish them” began without address anyone directly. The last part of the second verse: “so, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of” addresses the Quraysh directly after their crimes have been enumerated. The very punishment mentioned in the first verse without addressing them is now mentioned again – this time directly addressing the Quraysh. The eloquence found in this direct address with respect to warning them is clear. In other words, they should get rid of this baseless notion that they are the custodians of the House of God and its guardians. They are only indulging in self-praise. They have, on the contrary, penned a whole history of disbelief and of dishonesty with their promise with God. Now they should taste the flavour of punishment because of these misdeeds. Found in it is a threat and also a reference to the reversal they suffered in the battle of Badr and the ones they will later suffer. The implication is that they are now under God’s scourge and will continue to be its target.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَسَيُنفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لِيَبْذِرَ اللَّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضًا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكَبَهُ جَبِينًا فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

It is explained in these verses that the great fervour the Quraysh have at this time to uproot Islam and in this frenzy they are spending their wealth in charity will not be able to stop the ultimate truth – the believers are being promised – to become evident. It may be noted that at the time of the battle of Badr, the Quraysh had generously spent on the provisions of the battle. Every chief tried to outdo the other in providing these. This magnanimity had a great effect on the weak Muslims. They were overawed by the fact that the Quraysh had so much arms and that they also have wealth in abundance and the heart to spend it as well. They contended that how could Muslims

27. Those who are guilty of disbelief are spending their wealth to stop [people] from the path of God. They will be spending it; then it will become a yearning for them. Then they will be vanquished and these disbelievers will be gathered and driven towards Hell so that God may separate the pure from the impure and heap the impure over the impure; then cast this heap into Hell. It is these people who shall end up as losers.



with so little battle provisions fight the might of the Quraysh.

The verses ask the believers to not be overawed by this situation. Their efforts to stop the truth from manifesting itself will not succeed. The torrent of the advancement of the truth cannot be stopped in any way. Indeed, they have spent a lot and will continue to do so. However, the result will be that they will soon end up humiliated. Defeat is destined for them in this world and in the Hereafter too, they will be driven towards Hell. The preposition *إِلَى* occurs with *يُحْشَرُونَ* in this verse. This has incorporated the meaning of “driving” in the verb.

The expression: “so that God may separate the pure from the impure” is the *furqān* that will manifest itself in the Hereafter. There the Almighty will sift every evil from good and then collect the evil one on top of the other in heaps and then cast all this into Hell. The word *رَمَ* means to gather something in layers atop each other. This way is adopted when trash needs to be burnt. Such rubbish is gathered in layers and then burnt. Arranging it in layers is advantageous for the fire to burn more vigorously and everything collected becomes a source for burning one another. A subtle insinuation in this is that just as the disbelievers help one another in this world, in the same way they will be a source of burning each other by acting as firewood.

The words “it is these people who shall end up as losers” depict their worldly fate as well as the next-worldly one. In this world, they will end up earning no reward for their spending and thereby regret it, and will be totally vanquished. In the next world, they will be thrown into Hell like a heap of filth.

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَإِنْ يَعُودُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ انْتَهُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَاهُمْ ۖ نَعِمَ الْبَوَلَىٰ وَنَعِمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٣٠﴾

Earlier, it has been indicated that this is an invitation to the Quraysh to seek forgiveness. In other words, if they want to be secure from the promised doom, they should abstain from this attitude, repent, mend their ways and accept the message of the Prophet (sws). If they do this, their past sins would be forgiven by God and they will not be punished by Him.

The words “and if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed” is a sentence of warning right after they were exhorted. In other words, if

28. Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed. And keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God. Thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do. And if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian. What a wonderful guardian and what a good helper.



they do not desist and continue with their mischievous attitude, then they should remember that they will face God's established practice that was faced by earlier nations who had denied their messengers. This is a reference to the 'Ād, the Thamūd, people of Madyan and Lot (sws) etc whose accounts have been narrated in detail to the Quraysh in Sūrah al-A'rāf.

It may be noted that a nation to whom God's sends a messenger is conclusively delivered the truth by Him. Hence, if that nation persists in its disbelief, it is necessarily wiped out by God, whether through natural calamities or through the sword of the believers.

A messenger is the greatest, in fact, the final means of conclusive communication of the truth to its nation. For this reason, once this is done, no respite is granted to it.

In the next verse, Muslims are told to wage war against the Quraysh thus: "and keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God."

Two objectives of this war are mentioned. The first is persecution. Muslims were persecuted and oppressed on the basis of their religion. This war should only end when their persecution ends: no one is harassed for accepting faith, whether he is rich or poor, free or slave.

The second objective is that in the land of the House of God no other religion except Islam remains. It has been pointed out earlier that the House of God was built as a centre of the progeny of Abraham (sws) and as a place which must be faced during the prayer. This House was built for the worship of the one and only God. Only they were regarded as worthy of being its custodians who followed the religion of Abraham (sws) and who were diligent in the prayer. The Quraysh, as pointed out earlier, never fulfilled these objectives and converted it into a place of idol worship. When, in accordance with the invocation of Abraham (sws), the Almighty sent his last prophet to the Quraysh and he called people to the real Abrahamic faith, the leaders of the Quraysh who held their own interests as dear became his enemies and that of his companions and stopped them from entering this House. The fact was that it was they who really deserved to be the custodians of this House and not the Quraysh who had left the Abrahamic faith and taken to idolatry.

The Almighty directed the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims to wage war with these dishonest embezzlers and continue to do so until only Islam – the religion of Abraham (sws) – remains in Arabia. While referring to this fact, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: لا يجتمع دينان في جزيرة العرب (two religions cannot exist together in the land of Arabia).²⁹

In reality, this directive was meant for the land in which the House of God was located; however, it could only have been protected from the effects of disbelief and polytheism when the whole area of House of God is be cleansed from any interference from disbelief and polytheism. Moreover, just as Makkah has a sacred status since the

29. Mālik ibn Anas, *Mu'attā'*, vol. 2, 892, (no. 1584).



time of Abraham (sws), Madīnah was also given this same status by Prophet Muḥammad (sws). This increased the sphere of this directive. This entailed that all non-Muslim elements from this area be expelled from it in which the House of God was situated. Thus the hold of the disbelievers of the Quraysh was done away with from this whole area and then gradually the Jews and the Christians too were expelled from it.

It is evident from this that the conflict of the Muslims with the Quraysh was not in some minor issue. Since the very beginning, only the true community of Abraham (sws) had the right to live in the land of the House of God built as its centre of worship. In order to revive this community and cleanse the House of God, the Almighty sent His last messenger to the Quraysh from within them. The purpose was to complete His final religion and so that this House, in accordance with Abraham's (sws) invocation, becomes a fountainhead of guidance and blessings for all the world. More details will be furnished on this issue in the *tafsīrs* of Sūrah al-Tawbah and Sūrah al-Ḥajj.

The words “thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do” mean that if they reform their attitude, God will not hold them accountable for their past mistakes. He will only take into account their future deeds. If they are sincere in them, they will be dealt by Him accordingly.

The words “and if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian; what a wonderful guardian and what a good helper” imply that the believers should not be scared of the large weaponry and number of their enemy. God will continue to show His splendour in future the way He has showed it now. Since He is the best of guardians, He never disappoints people who turn to him in time of difficulty, and since He is the best of helpers, those who are helped by Him are never defeated.

Section V: Verses (41-49)

Readers may recall that the *sūrah* began with a question regarding the spoils of war raised by some people. At that instance, after giving a principle answer, the discourse shifted to reform the weaknesses of a group of Muslims. These had become evident from this question and some similar issues. Now, with regard to this question, the underlying principle in the distribution of war spoils is explained and Muslims are stressed upon to accept this distribution happily and whole-heartedly. This is because whatever they have obtained is because of God's scheme and planning and whatever they will obtain in the future too will be because of His scheme and planning. They should not think that it was because of their own planning that they acquired these spoils. It was God Who did all this through them.

After that, some directives are given regarding future wars. These directives are essential to succeed in these wars and also to distinguish those who wage war to make



the name of God prevail from other warriors.

Readers may study these verses in the light of this background and must continue to keep in mind that though the apparently the address in the whole of this *sūrah* is general, yet it is directed towards the group of weak Muslims.

Text and Translation

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُسُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْإِن سَبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ
 آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ الْجُبْنِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدُوِّ الدُّنْيَا وَ
 هُمْ بِالْعُدُوِّ النَّصْرَىٰ وَالرَّكْبِ أَهْلٍ مِنْكُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ لَا خِلَافَ لَكُمْ فِي الْبَيْعِ وَلَكِنْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۖ
 لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ إِذْ يُرِيدُكَ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَاصِكِ قَلِيلًا ۖ وَلَوْ
 أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَإِذْ يُرِيدُكَ اللَّهُ إِذِ التَّقِيَّتُمْ فِي
 أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۖ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٦٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ
 فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَرِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
 يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَادْرَأَيْكَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَاهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا تَرَ آتِ الْفَيْتَنِ
 نَكَصَ عَلَىٰ عَقَبَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦٧﴾ إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُبْتَغُونَ
 الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هَوَاهُ لَا يَنْصُرُهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

And be informed that a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things. (41)

Recall when you were at the near end of the valley and they were at the far end and the caravan was below you. And if you had co-ordinated with one another before departing, you would certainly not have been able to meet at the time set. But God did not allow any difference to take place in order that God decide this matter which was destined to happen so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof. Indeed, God hears and knows all. Recall when God was showing them to you few in number in your dream. And had He shown them to be more to you, you would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another regarding the matter. But God saved [you]. Indeed, He knows what is in the hearts. And recall when at the time you met He was showing them to you few in number and showing you to them few in number so that He may decide the matter which was destined to happen. And all matters return to God alone. (42-44)



Believers! When you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed. And obey God and His Messenger and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken. And remain steadfast. Indeed, God is with those who are steadfast. And be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully and displaying their grandeur and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing. And recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them and said: “There is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support.” So when the two groups faced one another, he took to his heels and said: “I am done with you; I am seeing what you do not. I fear God and God is stern in punishment.” Recall when the hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts were saying: “Their religion has deceived them,” and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise. (45-49)

Explanation

وَاَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ حُسْصَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ أَمِنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ اتَّخَذَ الْجَبْعُ نَصْرًا لِلَّهِ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

The context in which the words “and be informed” occur shows the grand as well as the certain nature of the directive stated here. It is evident from the beginning of the *sūrah* that some people had raised some very inappropriate questions about the spoils of war. A detailed comment then followed on the weakness of these people. It is in this verse that their question is actually answered. The nature of this answer is in the form of an admonition: they should listen to it very carefully and follow it without the slightest hesitation because it is from the king of the universe.

The expression غنم الشيء means فازبه وناله بلا بدل (to acquire something without exchange for anything). From this verb, the noun غنيمه has evolved. It refers to those things and resources which Muslims capture from the disbelievers in the battlefield. By referring to these captured things as نفل and غنيمه, the Qur’ān has made it evident that this is not a remuneration for the war waged. It is just a secondary benefit which a soldier receives. If he wages war for the cause of God, he only fulfils his obligation. Its reward lies with God in his eternal life in the hereafter. The spoils are just extra gains. If he acquires them, it is his good fortune and if he does not, then he should not have any greed for them.

Through this concept of spoils of war, the Qur’ān has reformed the notion the

30. And be informed that a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things.



people of *jāhiliyyah* still had about them: they regarded these spoils to be the real benefit of war and would judge success in a war on its basis. Some weak Muslims too were influenced by this concept and this showed itself in the battle of Badr. Thus the Qur'ān reformed it.

The words “a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer” form the detailed answer to the question raised in the very first verse of the *sūrah*. There I have indicated that a brief answer was given: spoils do not belong to individuals, as was the tradition of the *jāhiliyyah*; they have collective ownership. After that, the discourse shifted to reform the mentality of a certain group. It is now in the verse under discussion that a detailed answer is given.

It may be kept in mind that in the days of *jāhiliyyah*, the chiefs took one-fourth of the plundered wealth. It was called *mirbā'*. This wealth would be used by them personally. Islam stipulated that only one-fifth of the spoils would belong to the God and His Messenger, and this too, as will become evident, were meant for the welfare of the society.

First and foremost, the share of the Almighty is stated. God obviously is above all needs and does not need anything. His share is actually reserved to make His word prevail, to safeguard it and to promote and defend it. This may take different forms and shapes depending on the circumstances in different societies and different periods of time. However, in all cases, their purpose must be the same: to make God's word prevail.

The second share stated is that of God's Messenger (sws). I am inclined to think that this is not mentioned in his individual capacity but in his capacity of head of state. Muḥammad (sws) was God's envoy and also the head of the state of Madīnah that was set up by him. It was God Who had deputed him in his former capacity and the Qur'ān has specified that God had directly taken upon Himself the responsibility of his needs in this capacity. However, as the head of state he would spend each and every moment of his life in discharging his responsibilities in this capacity. As such, it became essential that a share be given to him for his personal use. In other words, this share was the share of the head of state and after the Prophet's death, it now stands transferred to his successors who will rule after him.

The third share stated is that of the near relatives. Obviously, by these are meant those relatives who were dependent on the Prophet (sws) for their livelihood and about the fulfilment of whose needs the Prophet (sws) considered himself to be responsible. This responsibility could be ethical, religious or conventional. It is one which is morally imposed on the gracious head of every family with regard to the poor, needy and the handicapped found in it. This is evident from the vastness found in the connotation of the word ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى (near relatives). Also apparent is that this share must continue even after the Prophet (sws) passes away otherwise it would not have been mentioned independently.



The fourth share is that of the poor, the orphans and the wayfarers. While stating this share, the particle ل (lām) is not repeated in this verse. This particle is appended to all the three shares stated before. This fourth category of shares is actually mentioned under the third stated share of near relatives. The reason is to honour the recipients of this category as if they are also the near relatives of the Prophet (sws). Those who are aware of Islam's temperament know that the status of the orphans and the needy is of the family of the head of state. Just as a head of state has concerns for his family, he also has the same, in fact, even more concern for the welfare of the needy and the wayfarers. The caliph 'Umar (rta) is reported to have said that his share in the wealth of the state is only as much as that of a guardian in the wealth of the orphans he is in charge of. He also has repeatedly said that the responsibility of all the needy and wayfarers of the state directly lies on him. It may be kept in mind that a society in which the orphans are disregarded, the needy sleep empty stomach and the wayfarers are not looked after can have no link with Islam whatever claim it may make.

Here it may also be kept in mind that there are people who regard the particle ل (lām) to be that of *tamlīk* (personal possession) and as a result do not allow this money to be spent on collective projects set up for the welfare of the poor, needy and the orphans. However, this opinion does not carry much weight as regards linguistics. In Arabic, the particle ل (lām) has many meanings including that of *tamlīk*. One of these meanings is to provide benefit. In my opinion, an Islamic government is fully authorized to spend on the collective welfare of the needy under this share. Giving money to them on an individual basis is not essential in all cases.

Consider next, the part **إِنْ كُنْتُمْ أَمْنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ التَّلَافُ**. The expression **يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ** (day of *furqān*) refers to the day in which the battle of Badr was fought. The words **يَوْمَ التَّلَافُ** (the day in which the two groups met) explain this expression. This is because it was that day which was the first one in which the believers and disbelievers engaged in a battle. It has already been explained why the Battle of Badr is called **يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ** (day of *furqān*). The leaders of the Quraysh themselves had regarded this battle to be a barometer of success. They contended that the one who lost this battle would be considered to be deviant and the one who won this battle would be considered to be the adherent to the truth. Moreover, also evident from this battle was the manifestation of God's help in multifarious ways to such an extent that everyone could clearly discern on whose side God was. It is to this help that the words "what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict" point.

The words "if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things" reinforce what is said in the earlier part of the verse. The implication is that they should follow the directive of distributing the spoils without any hesitancy if they believe in God and in His help that was sent down on the day when a decisive battle was fought between truth and falsehood. Since these words are directed at the people



who had raised objections on this distribution, it was said “if you believe in God.” It is evident from such questions that faith had not fully found its roots in their hearts. Also noteworthy is the fact that the words used are not: “if you believe in the help that We sent down to you.” On the contrary, they are: “that We sent down to Our servant.” It is evident from them that no group should think that this success was because of its own doing. Whatever happened was God’s work and the blessing of His messenger for whose help God sent His army. God has power over everything. Neither God nor His messenger is dependent on anyone. Whenever God wants, He will send His army to help His messenger.

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدُوِّ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدُوِّ الْقُصْوَى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ لَا خُتِلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيعَادِ ۖ وَلَكِنْ يَيَّقِضِي اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيِيَ مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝³¹

This verse depicts an example of God’s planning that was referred to in the previous verse.

It has been stated earlier that the Almighty had shown the image of the arrival of the caravan and the army of the Quraysh to the Prophet (sws) in a dream. In accordance with this guidance provided, he had marched out from Madīnah and reached the valley of Badr right at the time when on the opposite side the army of the Quraysh arrived faking protection of the caravan. It is no ordinary a thing for an army to arrive at the right place at the right time to fight the enemy. Success in the battle mostly depends on this. Even a slight delay, at times can result in defeat. Similarly, reaching the place well before time is also fraught with danger and can produce negative results. If not any other thing, the issue of supplies for the Muslims was a big issue especially when in those times they were almost unarmed and also very poor. In such situations, the warring armies also make strategies aimed at deceiving one another. The planning behind the declaration of war and giving ultimatum to the enemy might not be what seems on the surface. At times, the target is something else while the indication given is towards another thing. God protected the Muslims from all such connivances and through His special guidance made them reach the place they should have arrived to face the army. This was not a coincidence: it was God’s planning. If the warring armies had declared war and sounded a prior ultimatum, it would not have been easy to meet each other in the battlefield at the right time.

In the expression يَيَّقِضِي اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا, a verb is suppressed before يَيَّقِضِي. What is

31. Recall when you were at the near end of the valley and they were at the far end and the caravan was below you. And if you had co-ordinated with one another before departing, you would certainly not have been able to meet at the time set. But God did not allow any difference to take place in order that God decide this matter which was destined to happen so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof. Indeed, God hears and knows all.



implied is that God through His special planning made the believers face their enemy so that that happens what had to happen and destined.

The words “so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof; indeed, God hears and knows all” explain the scheme of God and its benefits. Death and life are referred to here in the spiritual sense.

Consider the words: **لِيَهْدِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ**. The letter **عَنْ** in Arabic is also a means of delineating the source and origin of something. The battle of Badr had become such a decisive event between the believers and the disbelievers that neither were the latter left with any excuse nor were the former left with any ambiguity. The disbelief of the disbelievers had become fully evident to them and the belief of the believers shone before them as the midday sun.

The attributes mentioned at the end of the verse relate to the whole scheme stated earlier. In other words, huge was the improbability of both armies facing one another and that too at the right time and so was the issue of the caravan; however, God knew their secret planning and their whisperings of the heart. He made each of them reach the right place to produce the result He intended to produce because He hears and knows all.

إِذْ يُرِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا ۖ وَلَوْ أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ
الصُّدُورِ³²

Stated in this verse is the second example of God’s planning. The Prophet (sws) not only told the believers that the number of the enemy was not large, but also gave them glad tidings this small faction will be vanquished by them. God did this because if He had shown the enemy to be large in number which they actually were, the Prophet (sws) would necessarily have informed the believers of this and this would have adversely affected weak Muslims. They would have lost the courage to fight and would have differed with one another whether they should fight or not. Since God is fully aware of the weaknesses of the hearts, He chalked out this scheme so that the morale of the Muslims remains intact and they remain strong.

From this verse, some people have derived the result that sometimes prophets of God are also shown something in their dreams which is actually against the reality. Thus the Quraysh army was very large in number but they were shown in small number to the Prophet (sws). However, this inference is not correct in my opinion. Dreams are among a means of revelation and hence the dream of a prophet can never

32. Recall when God was showing them to you few in number in your dream. And had He shown them to be more to you, you would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another regarding the matter. But God saved [you]. Indeed, He knows what is in the hearts.



be against reality. It may be kept in mind that at times a reality is shown in a symbolic way and not in its actual form. Same is the case here. Though the army of the disbelievers was large in number, it was not that much viz a viz its moral and actual standing. It was this actual and moral scarcity in their number that was shown in the dream. It is this aspect of a dream because of which it is essential to interpret it. At times, even a prophet, momentarily, is not fully clear about it. However, it is not true that the dream of a prophet is against reality.

Here also needs to be understood that the Qur'ān has used the word **قليل** in a very apt way. This is because this word does not only mean something which is less in number; it also means something which is less in the metaphorical and symbolic sense. Thus, for example, Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān says:³³

فإن أك في شماركم قليلا

فإنني في خياركم كثير

(If I am in small in status in your eyes O miscreants, there is nothing for me to worry; I have a big status in the eyes of your decent elements)

The words “would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another” are addressed in general sense. However, this does not mean that it relates to all Muslims. Thus in the conventional style of the Qur'ān, general words are used to refer to the character of a specific group among them which has been under discussion since the beginning of the *sūrah*. In verse 7, it is stated that this group in spite of knowing that the Prophet (sws) was going out to fight the army of the Quraysh, tried to convince him to take on the caravan. Moreover, in spite of the glad tidings given to it by the Prophet (sws) that those who will fight with them will be defeated, it was still scared to death. This verse is actually directed to this group. With this morale, if they had been told that they were to fight an army and that too a large one, they would have totally been overcome with a defeatist mentality. It is for this reason that the Almighty showed the number of the enemy to be small in the symbolic sense.

It may also be noted that at all instances: “showing them to you”, “your dream” and “shown them to be more to you”, the Prophet (sws) is addressed because the dream was only shown to him. A messenger of God is like the eye of the believers. Hence, it is he who sees but whatever he sees is related to all of them. For this reason, these words were addressed to the Prophet (sws) but when their response was stated in the verse, all the believers were included.

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ التَّقِيَمُمْ فِيْ أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيْلًا وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِيْ أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۖ وَ إِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ

33. Abū al-Faraj al-Aṣbahānī, *Al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, vol. 13, 287.



الْأُمُورُ ٣٤

This verse mentions another instance of help for the believers. The numbers were shown less to one another in the earlier stage so that both armies should not become scared of fighting and a decisive conflict between truth and evil ensue – something which had been destined to happen in the scheme of God.

The disbelievers only saw the actual small number of the army of the believers. They could not gauge its moral might which had practically transformed it into something formidable. However, in the later stages, they saw this small number in the form of a raging storm because at that time the moral might of the Muslims army fully manifested itself.

The believers saw the mighty army of the Quraysh to be less in number because the Almighty unveiled to them its moral status. One's sight is subservient to one's heart to a large extent. If the heart is strong and replete with resolve and conviction and has faith deeply rooted in it, even a mountain appears like a grain to it. Similarly, if it is focused on its objective and willing to go to the ultimate limit to achieve it, no hurdle can be an impediment before it. However, if the heart is devoid of these things as harmless an animal as the rabbit appears to be a lion to it. There is none stronger than a human being and none weaker. The source of this strength and weakness is not his external surroundings but rather his own inner self. In this era of materialism, it is not easy to make people understand that there was a time when a single believer had the same might as one thousand disbelievers. However, this is the bare truth and history bears evidence to it. Even today every person can experience it if he has tasted the flavour of faith.

The last part of the verse: "and all matters return to God alone" that everything happens from God. Matters like the number of some group being shown less than its actual count or vice versa, granting victory or inflicting defeat – all comes from God. The duty of an individual is to fulfil his obligations and leave the rest to God. He should never remain under the misconception that he can do whatever he wants to regardless of God's role.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا
فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

These verses give direction to the believers for future stages. Steadfastness is

34. And recall when at the time you met He was showing them to you few in number and showing you to them few in number so that He may decide the matter which was destined to happen. And all matters return to God alone.

35. Believers! When you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed. And obey God and His Messenger and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken. And remain steadfast. Indeed, God is with those who are steadfast.



essential because God's help always appears in the garb of available means and resources. This world is a place of test for people. It is only when they do their due that the help of God comes to their rescue. People do not have the right to test God like the Israelites by staying put and asking God to grant them victory.

Remembrance of God is a means to remain steadfast. It has been mentioned earlier that real strength is obtained from the heart and strength of heart is acquired through faith. Here it is said that faith remains lush and evergreen through God's remembrance. This remembrance is as essential as air is essential for life. This is because a person is always in conflict with Satan. However, in testing circumstances, this remembrance is needed more. For this reason, it is stated that the believers should remember God in abundance.

"Success" is a comprehensive Word. This comprises success both in this world and in the next. Mere dominance can be achieved without God's remembrance, but it cannot be a means of success. Success can only be acquired through that dominance whose door is opened with the help of God's remembrance and in which those who attain this dominance live in God's company. It should be kept in mind that the real factor which keeps an army steadfast is its morale. This fact has always been acknowledged in the past just as it is in the present era. Islam has said that it is God's remembrance that boosts the morale of an army waging war for His cause. The truth is that it is this remembrance which is the fountainhead of resolve in a believer.

Obedying God and His Messenger which this verse mentions has a special connotation as well besides its general one: believers must display immaculate discipline against the enemy; they must obey the directives of God and also those of His Messenger without any hesitancy. Just as a heart devoid of God's remembrance loses focus, similarly if a group of people is slack in carrying out orders, its discipline is compromised and cowardice gets the better of it.

The words "and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken" state in the negative sense was stated above in positive sense. It is this directive which was not followed by a group of believers in the battle of Uhud and its adverse consequence was borne by the whole army. In verse 152 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, it is stated: (حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَارَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِمَّنْ بَعْدَ مَا أَرْسَلَكُمْ مَّا تُحِبُّونَ) until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed [the Messenger] after God had made you see what you desired).

The word *فَاقْبِضُوا* is used synonymously with *وَاصْبِرُوا*. Both means to be steadfast in the imperative sense. However, the latter word was said with respect to individuals and the former is said with respect to the whole group. The implication is that if the believers want to earn God's help, they should prove themselves worthy of it through their collective conduct. God does not help a scattered and an indisciplined lot. He only helps those who fight for his cause in a united and an organized way.



وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَرِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٥٧﴾
 إِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌّ لَكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَرَ آتِ الْفِتْنَةِ نَكَسَ عَلَى
 عَقْبَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّي بِرِئَاءٍ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٨﴾³⁶

The word بَطَر means to show haughtiness before the truth and to turn away from it in arrogance. The Qur'ān calls it rebelliousness with which a person or a group is overcome with after receiving God's favours. Instead of showing gratitude they become arrogant and rebellious. In verse 58 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is stated: وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَوْمٍ لَّهُمْ بُطْرٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا³⁷

In these verses, the Qur'ān has stopped the believers to go against what they were asked to do earlier: remembering God in abundance. The words “like those who” refer to the Quraysh. As pointed out earlier, they had come out to the fight the battle of Badr in a very pompous and pretentious way. Their arrogance was due to their large number and copious means and resources. Believers are told not to adopt this attitude. Instead, they should be humble because they are exemplars of God's obedience and worship – which are based on humility. The purpose is to tell the believers that the war they wage is actually worship in essence and hence its majesty must always be maintained. The manner in which this instruction is given is to prepare them to be on guard about the future. Such circumstances will ensue in which they might succumb to trials if they are not on guard. In other words, glad tidings and warnings – both are found in these verses. They must always remain attached to God and never become arrogant if their number and resources increase. These resources are not the real thing; God's company and help are the real thing which believers should rely upon.

Here it should be kept in mind that just as one group in the battle of Uḥud had been inflicted with dispute, as mentioned earlier and had thereby placed the whole army in harm's way, in a similar way, on the occasion of the battle of Ḥunayn the believers faced a great trial because of showing conceit on their large number. Thus in verse 25 of Sūrah Tawbah, it is stated: وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ إِذْ أَعْبَيْتُكُمْ كُفِّرْتُكُمْ فَلَمَّ تَغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَصَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا³⁸ رَحَبَتْ ثُمَّ وَابَسَتْ³⁸

36. And be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully and displaying their grandeur and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing. And recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them and said: “There is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support.” So when the two groups faced one another, he took to his heels and said: “I am done with you; I am seeing what you do not. I fear God and God is stern in punishment.”

37. And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed.

38. And on the day of Ḥunayn also when you were overcome with pride on your large number. Then that large number was of no use to you and the earth despite its vastness became



The word “boastfully” refers to the pretentiousness with which each and every leader of the Quraysh in the battle of Badr was overcome with. The opposite of this word is “sincerity.” In other words, believers are being told that whatever they undertake must be solely to please God and to earn reward in the Hereafter and not to earn any worldly praise.

The first part of the clause in “and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing” point to the reason of their pomposity. The second part shows that these foolish people do not know that however much human beings may expand the circle of their achievements they are always in the control of God. Their feats are within His confines.

The words “and recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them” imply that not only was the pomposity of the Quraysh based on their abundant resources and large number, it was Satan’s false promises of help too that lured them away. He continued to motivate and urge them to fight. However, as soon as the two forces met in battle, he turned and ran away.

Satan is found both among humankind and jinnkind. However, here I am inclined to believe that the reference here is to the Jews. It is evident from books of history and the Qur’ān too that the Jews feared the message of the Prophet (sws). While he was still in Makkah, they tried to instigate the Quraysh against him in various ways. Once he migrated to Madīnah and received the support of the Anṣār, they specially became very apprehensive. Besides these fears about the future, they were also scared on the basis of the prophecies found in their scriptures that Muḥammad (sws) may well be the predicted messenger. They were not ready at any cost to accept a messenger from outside their lineage. However, because of their cowardice, they did not have the courage to directly launch any offensive against him. Yet, they would secretly instigate the Quraysh and also try to conspire and connive with the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. In these circumstances, it is quite possible that they too suggested the Quraysh to attack Madīnah in the garb of protecting the trade caravan. They must have enticed the Quraysh to fight the believers by reminding them that their large number was enough to defeat a handful of Muslims and in the second place, if needed, they too would help them. It may be noted that the Jews had also made a treaty with the Muslims, but as will be evident from verses 56-57 ahead that they never abided by it. In fact, they continued with their mischievous ways. However, because of their cowardice, they never came out openly to express their spite. They lured the Quraysh into the battle but when the two armies faced one another and they saw the morale of the Muslims, they became dumbfounded. At this instance, their dormant fear about the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) must have become active too. Their scriptures too foretold the arrival of a prophet that he would arrive in the company of angels.

It may also be kept in mind, as referred to in the tafsīr of Sūrah al-Baqarah that the

narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away.



battle of Badr with regard to its battle-layout, number of fighters and objective of the battle was similar to the one fought by the Israelites under Saul in the times of the Samuel (sws) against Goliath.

The parable cited here by the Qur'ān about the Jews is also used by it for the hypocrites belonging to Jews and had infiltrated among the believers to connive against them. They would comfort the Jews that if the believers attack them, they will side by them and not the believers. However, the Qur'ān has clarified that this is precisely the same deception as the one Satan inflicts on those who trust him. Since both these parables are very similar, I am going to cite them here so that what is under discussion becomes very clear.

In Sūrah Ḥashr, this is how the character of one group of hypocrites belonging to the Jews is depicted:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُولَيَنَّ الْأَفْيَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ. (٥٩: ١١-١٢)

Have you not seen the hypocrites? They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: “If you are driven out, then we shall, at all cost, go out with you, and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you.” God bears witness that they are absolute liars. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them and, if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch. (59:11-12)

Later in the same sūrah, these hypocrites are portrayed in a parable in the following words:

كَشَلِ الشَّيْطَانُ إِذْ قَالَ لِلنَّاسِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرُوا قَالَ إِنَّ بَرِيءًا مِّنْكَ إِنَّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ. (٥٩: ١٦-١٧)

And the example of the hypocrites is that of Satan who directs man: “Commit disbelief.” Then when he commits disbelief, he says: “I disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe.” Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded. (59:16-17)

Just as in these verses the hypocrites among the Jews are likened to Satan, in the verses under discussion too, though Satan is mentioned, but the Jews are insinuated. Instead of using a parable, insinuation has been employed here because all these



pranks of the Jews were clandestine. So the Qur’ān did not want to expose them at that time. However, the way they are mentioned also subtly exposes them a bit too so that they know that God is fully aware of their misdeeds. At the same time, the believers too are fore-warned of their hidden enemy. Here specially, if sentences like “there is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support” and “I am seeing what you do not” besides some others are deliberated upon, the actual reality will come to light.

The behaviour of Satan depicted here is a reflection of his inner-self and attitude. He does not say his words of support and disavowal through his tongue. Likewise, the similar behaviour of the Jews depicted is a reflection of their mental state and of their attitude. It is not that they said these words to the Quraysh. The word “said” in the Qur’ān has been mentioned at various places to depict what is said in the heart. The Jews had been blinded by their jealousy and wanted the Quraysh to wipe out the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, deep in their hearts they also knew that since they were facing a messenger of God and attacking him was like attacking a mountain and annihilating their own selves, they did not want to come out in the open with their enmity. They wanted others to bear this threat.

Also evident from this discussion is the character of Satan: he entices people to sin and offers them his support but when the time comes, he turns on his heels, lest he too may be taken to task. The Qur’ān has made it clear that those who adopt this attitude of Satan will be thrown into Hell. They are like hidden snakes which silently guide people to wrongs and do not take part in them for fear of God. They will suffer a painful punishment. The example of such people is that of a person who trains and instructs others in robbery and theft but never commits these crimes himself with his accomplices lest the police may catch him. It is obvious that such accomplices to crime are also culpable and will be seized for it. In fact, they reach the same fate as their followers if not more. It is to this fact the Qur’ān has referred to in these words of Sūrah al-Hashr cited earlier: “Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded.”

It is evident from this that the Jews too were afflicted with this Satanic attitude. They wanted that the believers should be destroyed. They even instigated the Quraysh to war against the believers but never participated in it themselves. The reason was that they also feared the divine police of God referred to them by the words “I am seeing what you do not.”

٣٩ اذ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّاهُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ دِينُهُمْ ۖ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

When the word “ailment” is used with “hypocrisy”, it means “jealousy.” After the

39. Recall when the hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts were saying: “Their religion has deceived them,” and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise.



conspiracies of Jews, the mischief worked by the hypocrites and jealous elements is now referred to.

The deception of religion referred to here is that the disbelievers contended that the believers think that in spite of their small number, they could take on the huge army of their enemy: their religion has made them lose their senses. When such sentences are uttered in particular by people belonging to their own faction, the believers were bound to be influenced by them. In particular, when they had very little resources, they could have lost their morale. However, God protected them from its evil effects.

The words “and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise” refer to the fact that in spite of the opposition of these hypocrites and other jealous elements, those who trusted God and proceeded for the onslaught saw from their own eyes that God is Powerful and Wise. He is with those who trust Him and no power can defeat Him. It is He Who chalks out the strategy for them and none can defeat His strategy.

Section V: Verses (50-58)

The succeeding verses say that the defeat the Quraysh have faced is just the first instalment of warning. The real punishment they will face is yet to come very soon when they face death. God’s established practice is that He does not deprive a nation of His favours until it adopts a wrong attitude. When it does so, it is first warned by God. When it does not pay heed to this warning and continues to increase in its rebelliousness, it is visited by a decisive punishment from God. How the Pharaoh and his people were dealt by Him is an example of this. They were first warned through various trials to make them realize their folly. When this did not happen, they were drowned by Him.

After that, it is stated that the filthiest people are those have become adamant on disbelief and did not profess belief. They repeatedly break their promises. If these people face the Prophet (sws) and his companions in some battle, they should rout them to such an extent that those who are supporting them also learn a lesson and those about whom the fear any breach of promise, they should throw it back on them because God does not like those who break promises.

Readers may now study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَذْبَاهُمْ ۚ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿٥١﴾ كَذَابِ ۖ إِلَٰهٍ فِرْعَوْنُ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَآخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُعَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُ مَا



بِأَنفُسِهِمْ^{٤٠} وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ^{٤١} كَذَابِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ^{٤٢} وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَعْرَفْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ^{٤٣} وَكُلَّ كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ^{٤٤} إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ^{٤٥} الَّذِينَ عَاهَدَتْ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ^{٤٦} وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ^{٤٧} فَمَا تَتَّقَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرَّدَ بِهِمْ مَنْ خَلَفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ^{٤٨} وَإِنَّمَا تَخَافَنَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةٌ فَاتَّبِعْ آلِيهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ^{٤٩} إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُجِبُ الْخَائِبِينَ^{٥٠}

And if you would have been able to see when the angels claim the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and while saying: “Taste now the torment of burning!” This is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants. (50-51)

The same thing happened to them as had happened to the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the revelations of God; so, God seized them for their sins. Indeed, God is mighty; He is stern in retribution. This happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself. And God indeed hears and knows all. They face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the signs of their Lord; so, at last, We destroyed them because of their sins and drowned the Pharaoh’s people. And all these were unjust. (52-54)

Indeed, in the sight of God, the vilest animals are the people who denied and are not in any way prepared to believe. With whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear. So, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson. And if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back their promise to them on equal terms. And God does not like the treacherous. (55-58)

Explanation

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا^{٤٠} الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ^{٤١} وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ^{٤٢} ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ كَيْسٌ بَظْلَامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ^{٤٣}

The answer to the conditional clause “and if you would have been able to see ...” is suppressed. This suppression is in deference to eloquence. In other words, the heinous nature of the believers are being told to see is beyond words.

The expression بَظْلَامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ reflects a special linguistic style: the negation on the exaggerated statement is meant to exaggerate the negation. It means: God is not the

40. And if you would have been able to see when the angels claim the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and while saying: “Taste now the torment of burning!” This is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants.



slightest bit unjust to His servant. Thus Imru' al-Qays uses expressions like *كَيْسٌ بِفَعَالٍ*⁴¹ and *كَيْسٌ يَقْتَالُ*⁴² meaning “such and such a person has no not the slightest ability to do anything” and “such an such a person has not the slightest ability to fight a battle” respectively.

The implication is that the real beating the disbelievers were inflicted with in the battle of Badr was from the angels when they claimed their souls. Had the believers been able to see this thrashing, they would have got to know how utterly routed the disbelievers were. After that is the phase of the punishment of Hell that cannot be even be imagined in this world.

The words “this is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants” imply that they will only reap what they sowed.

كَذَابِ الْإِلَهِ فَمِنْ عَوْنٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٦﴾
 ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَى قَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ كَذَابِ الْإِلَهِ فَمِنْ عَوْنٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الْإِلَهِ فَمِنْ عَوْنٍ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾⁴³

The word *ال* not only refers to one's children but also to one's followers and nation.

The fate of the Pharaoh's nation and those before them was because of their ingratitude, denying God's revelations and not duly valuing His signs.

Concomitant indications show that the punishment referred to in the words “so, God seized them for their sins” is the one God inflicts on nations to warn them. Once a messenger is sent to a nation, such warnings specially manifest themselves. Readers can look up verses 115 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, 42 of Sūrah al-An'ām and 94 of Sūrah al-A'rāf to understand this established practice of God. The implication is that this reversal suffered by the Quraysh in the battle of Badr was meant to shake and jolt them and was in accordance with God's established practice. Examples of earlier nations can be seen in history. Now it remains to be seen whether the Quraysh benefit from these warnings or by following in the footsteps of most of their predecessors

41. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Muqrī al-Tilmasānī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Undulus al-raṭīb*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388 AH), 519.

42. Abū al-Qāsin Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-Balāghah* (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, 1399 AH), 452.

43. The same thing happened to them as had happened to the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the revelations of God; so, God seized them for their sins. Indeed, God is mighty; He is stern in retribution. This happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself. And God indeed hears and knows all. They face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the signs of their Lord; so, at last, We destroyed them because of their sins and drowned the Pharaoh's people. And all these were unjust.



persist in denying their messenger and God's revelations. If they become adamant on their denial, God will destroy them the way he destroyed the Pharaoh's nation and others.

In these verses, the words كَذَّبَ الْفِرْعَوْنَ occur twice. This is not a repetition; in fact, two different things are stated at both places. First it is said that this is the same warning that was meted out to the Pharaoh and other nations. It is then stated that if they do not benefit from this warning, they too will ultimately be afflicted with the same decisive torment that these nations were afflicted with.

The words "this happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself" state the wisdom behind God warning nations. When God does a favour to a nation, it is not without reason. It is because it professes certain attributes and traits. Similarly, when it deprives a nation of His favour, it is not without a cause. It is because He sees that a nation has lost the very attributes and traits that made it worthy of this favour. It is this deviance on its part that entailed that it be warned and delivered the truth in a conclusive manner. If this warning wakes it, it will continue to enjoy this favour; otherwise, it will be stripped off it after conclusive communication to the truth. It itself is responsible for this state of affairs. God is not unjust to it.

In other words, the Quraysh are admonished that they still have a chance and they can avail it. God does not want to forcibly snatch away the favour He did to them; it is because of their own wayward beliefs and deeds that are its cause.

The words "and God indeed hears and knows all" imply that there is a certain law which God follows. It is based on His hearing and knowledge. After granting authority, means and resources to nations, He continues to observe what they do on the basis of these attributes.

The words "they face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh" depict the fate the Quraysh will meet in the future if they do not learn a lesson from the warnings meted out to them. They will face God's decisive punishment. The difference of words and tone found in both these verses may be noted. The first verse said كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ and the second one says كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ. The previous one had the words فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ and this one has وَأَعْرَضُوا عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ. Without making this distinction between the two, the occasion and context of both will become clear.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ عَاهَدَتْ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَ هُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَمَا تَتَّقُهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْقِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِنَّمَا تَخَافَنَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةٍ فَالْبَيْدُ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾⁴⁴

44. Indeed, in the sight of God, the vilest animals are the people who denied and are not in



This is a reference to the Jews and other tribes with whom the Prophet (sws) made agreements after his migration. They include the tribes of Juhaynah, ʿAṣṣah and the Banū Mudlij among others. The Prophet (sws) continued to abide by these agreements but the Jews did not honour them even for one day and these tribe too openly or secretly violated them because of provocation from the Jews or pressure from the Quraysh.

The emphasis and intensity found in the words إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ has already been explained in verse 22 earlier. It negates the very reason for their existence. In other words, a group of people has value and importance as long as it has the ability to think and understand. Those who do not have this ability neither professed faith earlier nor will do so in future. They now are only a heap of filth and the world of God will not benefit from their existence anymore. Here it may be kept in mind that a messenger is the final means of conclusive communication of the truth. Those who do not open their eyes even after him have no cure for their blindness and there is no purpose left to let them remain on earth. If God gives people the opportunity to live, it is not merely to give them life for the sake of it; the purpose is that they think, understand and mend their affairs.

The words “with whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear” refer to the people mentioned earlier who never abided by their promise. Whenever a testing situation would arise, they would try to harm the believers. Their sympathies continued to be with the Quraysh. Repeated breach of agreement bears witness to their heard-heartedness, shallow character and a lack of sense of honour.

The words “at every instance” show that for the purpose for which this treaty was made, if a similar trial would befall, they would never abide by it. The expression “and have no fear” means that they would not stay away from the breaking the treaty and from its consequences. The fact is that abiding by promises is a universally accepted norm and also a matter of accountability before God.

The words “so, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson” imply that at the moment whatever nuisance they are creating is behind a veil and none of them has the courage to come into the open. However, if believers meet them in a battle, then such should be the extent of their strike that not only the combatants are routed but others who are planning something similar too are utterly discouraged.

Consider next, the part: “and if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back

any way prepared to believe. With whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear. So, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson. And if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back their promise to them on equal terms. And God does not like the treacherous.



their promise to them on equal terms.” It is a general guidance for all similar treaties. Their responsibility is not a one sided process. It is the responsibility rests on both parties. The expression *عَلَى سَوَاءٍ* means that Muslims also have the right to retaliate on equal footing. It is evident from it that the revenge should never exceed the harm inflicted: it should be commensurate with it. Some people have derived from this expression that it is essential to inform the opposite party about the termination of a treaty. I could find no argument for this deduction in it. However, what is evident is that a mere hypothetical fear is not enough to end a treaty. The other party must have practically breached it. In the first place the verb *تَخَافَنَّ* has emphasis in it. Secondly, the condition *عَلَى سَوَاءٍ* also points to this.

The last part of verse 58: “and God does not like the treacherous” is a statement of acquittal. In other words, God has no relation with such treacherous people. So when God has no relation with them, how can the believers maintain relations with them? Also indicated in this is that if the believers want to maintain these relations with them they should remember that they are being cordial with those hated by God.

Section VI: Verses (59-66)

In the succeeding verses, believers are urged to remain prepared for war and make available for themselves the military might for this. The reason was that after being defeated in the battle of Badr, the Quraysh were writhing with anger. At the same time, the Jews too were fervently making new plans to inflict defeat upon the believers. Earlier, they had pinned their hopes on the Quraysh to rout the believers but this plan had miserably failed. In view of these circumstances, the believers were directed to fully prepare themselves for war.

In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is assured that if the enemy shows any compromising attitude, he too can make peace with them. However, if in the guise of this compromise, they play a trick, then he should remember the God Who granted victory through His help to a handful of believers is with him.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should be scared owing to the small number of believers. For him, God and these few believers are sufficient. He should console the believers by telling them that ten of them will be enough for a hundred disbelievers. Real strength is the strength of the heart and not number of combatants. The enemy have hollow hearts.

It is evident from concomitant indications that verse 66, the last verse of this section, was revealed when the believers had become large in number. This reduced the responsibility on them which the previous verse had spelled out. Since verse 66 had the same topic, it was placed right after it. It will be explained later.

**Text and Translation**

وَلَا يَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَبَقُوا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهَبُونَ بِهِ
عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَ
أَنْتُمْ لَا تظْلُمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦١﴾ وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ
فَأِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۚ هُوَ الَّذِي آتَاكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِمْ ۖ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتْ
بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا
النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ۚ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عَشْرُونَ طَائِفَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا
مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآثَمِهِمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ أَلَنْ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا ۚ فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ
يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And these disbelievers must not remain under the misconception that they will escape. They can never go beyond Our grasp. And as much as you can, prepare against them an army and trained horses so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours and others beside them too who you do not know. God knows them. And whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you. And you shall not be given any less. (59-60)

And if they people tilt towards peace, you also tilt to it and trust God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. And if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you. It is He who aided you through His help and through the believers and joined their hearts with one another. And had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts; but God joined them. Indeed, He is Mighty and Wise. (61-63)

O Prophet! Sufficient is God for you and sufficient are these believers who have chosen to follow you. O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war. If there are twenty among you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred; and if a hundred, they shall subdue a thousand of the disbelievers. This is because these are a people without insight. (64-65)

Now God has lessened your responsibility and He knew that some weakness has come into you: So, if there are a hundred of you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they shall subdue two thousand with the directive of God. And God is with those who remain steadfast. (66)

**Explanation**

وَلَا يَخْسِرَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاسْبِقُوا^{٤٥} إِيَّاهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ

In the previous verses, the disbelievers were warned and it was specially pointed out to them that God embraces all their conspiracies and mischief. The verse under discussion further emphasizes this point: God has now started to go after them and they should not think that they will run away from Him.

The phrase أعجزه الصيد means “the prey could not be caught; he escaped grasp.”

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ^{٤٦} مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ^{٤٦} وَآخِرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ^{٤٦} لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ^{٤٦} اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ^{٤٦} وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ^{٤٦}

The power قُوَّة is also used in the Qur’ān to refer to the number of people and manpower. This is evident from verse 69 of Sūrah Tawbah, verse 80 of Sūrah Hūd, verse 65 of Sūrah al-Kahf, verse 15 of Sūrah al-Fuṣṣilat.

The expression رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ refers to horses which are specially trained for war and are dedicated and preserved for this purpose. Not all types of horses can be used in battles. In the battles of those times, horses occupied the real importance. The Arabs would specially train them for this objective keeping in view their climate. Precisely the same directive is given here to the believers: besides organizing individuals for this purpose, they should train and prepare horses. Until then, whenever the chances of a battle would arise, in accordance with the general Arab custom, every soldier would come out with whatever resources he had. However, in this verse, believers are told that they should increase their military might both in weapons and in number of combatants. Horses had the same significance in those times in battles as tanks and planes have in current times. In the battle of Badr, believers had very few horses with them. Hence they were directed to increase their number for future campaigns.

The words “so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours” state the objective of the whole exercise. This will deter the enemy and they will dare not think of attacking the believers. Here all enemies of the believers are regarded as the enemies of God because it was for His cause they fought whomsoever they needed to fight. There was no other motive in it.

The words “and others beside them too who you do not know; God knows them” imply that there were two categories of enemies of God and of the believers. The first

45. And these disbelievers must not remain under the misconception that they will escape. They can never go beyond Our grasp.

46. And as much as you can, prepare against them an army and trained horses so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours and others beside them too who you do not know. God knows them. And whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you. And you shall not be given any less.



category was of those who had come out in the open like the Quraysh. They had been their enemies since the very first day. The second category was of those who were hidden like the Jews. Their clandestine connivances and conspiracies have been mentioned earlier. Also included in this category were those tribes who had struck a treaty of non-alignment with the Prophet (sws) but too were thinking of breaching it at the provocation of the Quraysh and the Jews. Moreover, the hypocrites too were fully supporting and carrying out the plans of the enemies. In Sūrah Tawbah, the Qur'ān has referred to them thus:

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْبَدَايِنَةِ مَرَدُّوا عَلَى النَّغَاقِ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ. (١٠١:٩)

And there are hypocrites among the villagers who live around you and among the inhabitants of Madīnah also. They have become adept in their hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them. We shall punish them twice. Then they will be driven towards a great torment. (9:101)

Moreover, there were foreign forces too like the Romans, the Ghassanids and the Persians etc. They came out in the open later when the whole of Arabia came under the sway of Islam. In the verse under discussion, the Qur'ān while directing the believers about the circumstances of those times has also referred to the hidden enemies of the near and the distant future. They should prepare themselves keeping in view the present and the future. They must not think that it is a temporary issue of the present.

The words “and whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you; and you shall not be given any less” are meant to encourage the believers to spend for the preparations of the war. It may be kept in mind that “fully repaid to you” will be in accordance with the principle which God has prescribed for the reward of virtues and which has been mentioned at other instances in the Qur'ān.

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۖ هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١﴾ وَأَلْفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۖ لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلْفَتْ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾⁴⁷

The word سلم means “peace and compromise” and occurs in the feminine gender.

47. And if they people tilt towards peace, you also tilt to it and trust God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. And if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you. It is He who aided you through His help and through the believers and joined their hearts with one another. And had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts; but God joined them. Indeed, He is Mighty and Wise.



Earlier the objective of war stated was to make Islam prevail in the whole of Arabia and no persecution remains. This meant that the war with the Quraysh would not end until every trace of disbelief and polytheism was eradicated. In the verse under discussion, it is stated that it is not against the given directive if peace is made with the Quraysh at some stage if they take its initiative. The Prophet (sws) was given the permission to accept this initiative. Keeping in view, the malice and enmity that the leaders of the Quraysh had shown against the believers until that time, it was not expected that they would ever sincerely come forward with such a suggestion. On the contrary, it was very much probable that they would try to deceive the believers through it. For this reason, the issue of depending on them was something very difficult. However, since the dictates of collective justice entail that the offer of peace by the enemy should not be turned down, the Prophet (sws) was directed to accept it in spite of the possibility of deception. He should trust God Who hears and knows all. If while trusting God, he bears the risk of danger for a good purpose, God will help the Prophet (sws), and his enemies will not be able to misuse it.

The words “and if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you” imply what best can happen: deception. And if this happens, God is enough for their support. The profundity of God being sufficient for the believers is beyond words. In fact, without expression, it is very evident. Here, a thing especially worthy of note is that the justice to which Islam urges people in their personal lives is the same it urges them in their international affair. The latter is done while specifying that even if there is any danger or threat in accepting terms of peace, this suggestion should not be turned down. In fact, should be accepted by trusting God. The words “and trust God” should be specially kept in consideration: it is not in the four walls of the mosque that trust is needed; in a battlefield, it is the real strength of the believers and is also a support for them in international affairs.

The words “it is He who aided you through His help and through the believers” state the reason why God is sufficient for the believers: the God Who helped them in the battle of Badr through His angels and a handful of them were able to crush the huge army of the enemy, will also help them if these enemies try to attack them in the garb of their suggestion of peace. He will not let them misuse this virtuous deed.

The words “and had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts” explain what was said earlier that God will help the Prophet (sws) through the believers: it is not something ordinary; it is only possible because of divine help. It is not difficult to gather people for a satanic purpose. Every ardent advocate can do this. However, to gather some selfless people purely for God’s cause in which the purpose is none else but to please Him and to maintain the priority of the Hereafter is not possible without divine help and blessings. People who had gathered around the Prophet (sws) had been incriminated with all sorts of evils in their previous lives before they accepted faith. They had separate tribes; they were severely



biased; each tribe had its own deities and these people would blindly worship them; their interests mutually clashed and to realize them they would use all sorts of illegal means and defy the norms of justice. To cleanse such a people from all their prejudices and vested interests and from all their customs and traditions was not possible without divine help. This help transformed them into individuals with a new outlook and also instilled in them the love of this outlook to the extent that they were ready to sacrifice their wives, children, assets, families, tribes, country and nation. Only God can do this. No human being can accomplish this task even if he spends all the wealth of the world for this purpose.

God is Mighty and Wise. He accomplishes whatever task He intends to and all His tasks are based on wisdom. Here the indication is towards the divine law of guidance.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ۖ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ

عَشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ أَبَاهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ۚ

The first of these verses forms a prelude to the directive given to the Prophet (sws) in the second regarding urging the believers to war. The implication is that for him God's companionship and that of a handful of believers is sufficient. He should not be worried about the large number of his enemy and the small number of his own companions. In other words, this is the same statement of assurance that was given earlier in verse 62: "God is sufficient for you; it is He who aided you through His help and through the believers." Some people opine that by regarding the words "and the believers who have chosen to follow you" to be connected to God produces an element of polytheism. However, this opinion emerges from not reflecting on the context. The interpretation I have done is very clear and in accordance with parallel verses of the Qur'an and is without any element of polytheism in it.

The words: "O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war" are an explanation of what is stated earlier. Even though his companions are small in number but they are actually large if their insight in faith is taken into consideration. On the other hand, his rivals are totally devoid of it.

فقه refers to the insight of faith. It is this insight which is man's real quality. When a believer who is equipped with it sets foot in the battlefield, he finds within his solitary soul the power of a whole army. He experiences Divine help around him and death becomes dearer to him than life. The reason is that his insight illuminates before him the exalted destination in Paradise reserved for martyrs. It is this very insight which produces in him the perseverance and strength that make him equal in might to ten

48. O Prophet! Sufficient is God for you and sufficient are these believers who have chosen to follow you. O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war. If there are twenty among you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred; and if a hundred, they shall subdue a thousand of the disbelievers. This is because these are a people without insight.



people who are devoid of it.

الَّذِينَ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۖ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

The word “now” in this verse concomitantly indicates that this verse was revealed much later than the previous one. It was revealed when the number of believers had increased. Thus the proportion of dominating the disbelievers also changed from 1:10 to 1:2. The numbers mentioned in this verse (hundred and two hundred; thousand and two thousand) in comparison to the previous one (twenty and two hundred; hundred and thousand) also show that this verse relates to the period in which the number of believers had increased. Since this verse topically related to the previous one, it was placed here. This placement in itself is a proof of coherence found in the Qur’ān.

The fact that ten believers will prevail on a hundred disbelievers is stated as a glad tidings. However, this also imposes a heavy responsibility on the believers: they must not turn their backs if they face their enemy in such a ratio. As stated in verse 16 earlier, since turning one’s back in a battle is a great sin, the believers must have naturally regarded this to be an onerous responsibility and would have tried to fulfil it conscientiously. Later, as the verse under discussion states, this proportion decreased.

Two reasons are evident from the words of this verse regarding the reduction in proportion:

First, when with God’s blessings, the number of the believers increased, He graciously reduced the responsibility imposed on later Muslims than the ones on the *سَبَقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ* (the pioneer converts). It was reduced to 1:2 from the original 1:10.

Second, people who later entered the folds of Islam did not have the same insight of faith as the pioneer converts. In their collective capacity, the extent of this insight was much less and hence the responsibility was reduced. The word *ضَعْفٌ* (*ḍa‘f*) in Arabic is not only used for material and physical weakness but also for weakness in determination, insight and faith.

Deliberation shows that these verses of Sūrah al-Anfāl also highlight the principle on which divine help descends on the believers. The basic thing that entitles them to this help is perseverance. Without this trait they do not become worthy of help. Secondly, the proportion in which means and resources increase, the help of God reduces by the same proportion. Thirdly, real strength is the strength of faith. The rest come under it. Fourthly, whatever happens, happens at God’s bidding. Hence, God should be trusted and not the resources.

49. Now God has lessened your responsibility and He knew that some weakness has come into you: So, if there are a hundred of you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they shall subdue two thousand with the directive of God. And God is with those who remain steadfast.

**Section VII: Verses (67-71)**

In the succeeding verses, the propaganda launched by the Quraysh against the believers after being defeated in the battle of Badr is responded to. Before this battle, they regarded the weakness of the believers to be a proof against the veracity of Islam, as has been mentioned in detail earlier. They contended that if this was a true religion, why would such weak individuals be made its recipients? If Muḥammad (sws) was a true prophet, would he have had such meagre means and resources? Had Islam been a true religion, why were its rivals not inflicted with punishment? In short, they regarded their dominance and Islam's weakness to be a proof of their being right and Islam being wrong. So much so, they contended victory in the battle of Badr a barometer of success. Their leaders openly declared that whoever wins in this battle, will be regarded to be a follower of the truth and vice versa. Ultimately, when the result came out to be against their expectation and against their own criterion of success, they started to change the direction of their propaganda in order to protect their people from the negative effects of defeat. They now started to say that how can a prophet instigate war among the people of his own nation, cause massacre in the land, have his own people captured and made prisoners, exact ransom and distribute it among his own people? They meant that all these things can only be done by those who seek political authority and worldly gains? How can such a person be a prophet and have anything to do with God?

The Quraysh, on the one hand, wanted to protect their people from the negative effects of the battle lest they accept the veracity of Islam and Muḥammad because of this crushing defeat suffered. On the other hand, they very cleverly wanted to strike a blow at the zeal for *jihād* which naturally became evident in the believers after the battle. These circumstances entailed that an answer be given to this propaganda so that at least the believers are not negatively influenced in any way. Thus all these related groups are addressed here and given a rejoinder.

First the leaders of the Quraysh are addressed and told that the responsibility of what happened lies on them and not on the Prophet (sws). No prophet would ever think of capturing prisoners, receive ransom and cause carnage in the land to loot the spoils of war. It is they who like to do this and not God. They should be thankful that matters did not worsen. Otherwise the mischief they had spread entailed a painful torment for them from God. However, every event has been prescribed a time by Him. For this reason, some respite has been given to them.

After that, the believers are addressed and told to not be influenced in any way by the propaganda of these mischief-mongers. The spoils of war they have acquired are absolutely permissible.

In this regard, a message is given to the prisoners of the battle of Badr who were set



free after the payment of ransom that they should not be sad on this payment. It is a favour done to them. If they value this favour, it may well be that God does more favours to them. However, if they do not value this favour and again come back to wage war against Islam, they should remember that they will see more suffering than before.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُفْخَرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ لَئِيْلَ مَا كَانَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾
لَا كُتِبَ مِنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقٌ لِّسَّاسِكُمْ فِي مَا أَحَدْتُم مَّعَادِبَ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَكُونُوا مِمَّا غَنَبْتُمْ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَن فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ مِنَ الْأَسْرَىٰ ۖ إِنْ يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

It is not befitting for any prophet that he capture prisoners so that he even cause bloodshed in the land for it. It is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter. And God is Powerful and Wise. Had God's verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you because of the attitude you had adopted. (67-68)

Thus the spoils of war you have obtained, consume them by regarding them to be lawful and pure. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (69)

O Prophet! Inform the captives in your possession: If God sees something good in your hearts, He shall grant you that which is better than what has been taken from you and shall forgive your sins. And God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God. Thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise. (70-71)

Explanation

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُفْخَرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ لَئِيْلَ مَا كَانَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾
لَا كُتِبَ مِنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقٌ لِّسَّاسِكُمْ فِي مَا أَحَدْتُم مَّعَادِبَ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٦٨﴾⁵⁰

The style مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ is meant to state a blame as well as to absolve some of a blame. It is used both ways in the Qur'ān and the context, occasion and addressees readily determine in which sense it is used. Precisely the same style can be seen in verse 161 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān: وَمَنْ يُغْلُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا عَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ (it is

50. It is not befitting for any prophet that he capture prisoners so that he even cause bloodshed in the land for it. It is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter. And God is Powerful and Wise. Had God's verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you because of the attitude you had adopted.



not in accordance with the stature of any prophet to be dishonest and he who does so shall be brought on the Day of Judgement with his ill-wish.) Obviously, this verse absolves the Prophet (sws) from the blame mentioned. All exegetes are unanimous about this verse that it addresses the hypocrites regarding their accusation on the Prophet (sws). It is something which only reflects on their own selves. No prophet can ever indulge in dishonesty and betrayal. In precisely the same style, in the verse under discussion, the blame caste by the Quraysh on the Prophet (sws) is refuted. They had alleged that he, because of his greed for power, caused bloodshed among his brethren, had some of them captured, plundered their wealth and exacted ransom from them. These blames are only meant to cover up their own guilt. No prophet can ever do these things. They accuse the Prophet of these things because they regard him to be analogous to their own selves.

The words “it is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter” address the Quraysh. The style of address in the Qur’ān is like that of an adept orator. It addresses all the factions in front of him one after the other keeping in consideration their views. What is said itself explains the addressees it is directed to and which of its doubts or objections are answered. Here too, it is the same situation. There is absolutely no possibility to regard the believers and among them the Prophet (sws) and Abū Bakr (rta) to be the addressee of these words. However, if for the sake of discussion and that too with a heavy heart, they are regarded to be addressees, then how can one dare imagine they are the addressees of the next verse too?

Nevertheless, in my opinion, these words address the Quraysh and give an answer to the propaganda they had spread. Here the eloquence of the discourse should be kept in mind: it was not said that the Prophet and the believers want the hereafter; on the contrary, it was said that God wants the hereafter. The purpose of this is to express the fact that whatever is happening through the hands of the Messenger of God and the believers is not happening because of their will and intention; they are mere means in this whole undertaking. Whatever they are doing is precisely the will and intention of God. It is the will of God for His people that if they do everything while keeping in mind that their real objective is the Hereafter, then no step taken by God’s messenger and his companions is against the will of God. In other words, God has taken upon Himself the responsibility of the battle of Badr and all other undertakings of similar nature. In the end, it is said that God is powerful and wise. No one can stop Him if He decides to do something and whatever He intends to do is based on justice and wisdom. Whatever frivolous talk they are indulging in, they should continue with it.

The words “had God’s verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you” imply that these people are expressing dismay at what has happened to them even though this was just a small reversal in the eyes of God. The prank they played at that instance entailed that a great torment should have seized them; however, God has prescribed a time for each nation. Before this time, its fate hangs in the



balance. For this reason, He has given the Quraysh a period of respite. In other words, instead of raising hue and cry on what has happened, it is better that they take advantage of this opportunity and reform themselves before the decisive verdict visits them.

Consider the expression **فِيئَا أَخَذْتُمْ**. No elucidation exists in the ambiguity found in **مَا**. The verb **أَخَذَ** means “to take”, “to get hold of”, “to adopt”, “to begin a task” etc. In verse 50 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, it is stated: **وَإِنْ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرًا مِنْ قَبْلُ**.⁵¹ In the verse under discussion, the expression implies that the attitude they have adopted entailed that a great torment visit them but they have been granted respite under God’s law.

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in the interpretation of this verse. They are of the view that these verses rebuke the Prophet (sws), Abū Bakr (rta) and others for accepting ransom from the prisoners of the battle of Badr before causing enough bloodshed in the land. There seems no need to refute this incorrect view once the correct view has been presented. However, I will nevertheless state some important points here.

1. If it is supposed that the Prophet (sws) and the companions erred in accepting this ransom, it was not of the nature of violating a previous prohibition. It was purely an error of judgement. Such an error does not entail that they be warned of a grave punishment, especially when this error was actually not regarded as an error right after by the Almighty.

2. This cannot even be counted as an error of judgement. It has already been stated in Sūrah Muḥammad that prisoners of war can be executed or released with or without ransom.

3. As far as bloodshed is concerned, it was fully took place in this battle. Seventy people from the Quraysh which included their great leaders had been killed in it and almost the same number was captured. The rest of the army ran away. So what was the use of continuing with the battle?

4. The words which mention the torment are very specific in the diction of the Qur’ān. They are only used to express anger on die-hard disbelievers and hypocrites and none else. Citations may increase the bulk of this explanation. Those who have any doubt can take a look at all instances in which the expression **لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ** occurs.

⁵² **فَكُونُوا مِمَّا عَشَبْتُمْ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ**

Now the believers are addressed and told to not care about the foolish talk of these

51. And if some calamity befalls you, they say: “Good that this happened. We had already secured ourselves,” and they return joyous.

52. Thus the spoils of war you have obtained, consume them by regarding them to be lawful and pure. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.



people and consume the spoils without any reluctance. This verse is co-ordinated to the previous verse with the particle ف because this verse is part of what is stated in the previous verse in defence of the believers. The only difference is that the previous verse addressed the Quraysh because it was they who needed to be addressed and told what was said. The direction of address of this verse has turned towards the believers because it was meant for them. A very pertinent example of this style can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah Yūsuf:

يُوسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ ۖ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ . (١٢ : ٢٩)

Joseph, leave aside this matter and O you woman! Seek repentance for your sin. Indeed, you are the wrongdoer. (12:29)

Readers can see that in one breath the chief of Egypt has addressed both Joseph (sws) and his own wife. This change of addressee is evident from the content as well as direction of address.

The verse under discussion assures the believers that the spoils of war are lawful. The purpose of this assurance actually is to answer the Quraysh. It has been pointed out earlier that after the battle of Badr they had raised the propaganda that these believers claim to be religious but what they do is against religion. How can religious people cause bloodshed, loot spoils, accept ransom and merrily consume it? Only people who are after worldly gains and pleasures do such things. The Qur’ān has consoled the believers to disregard such edicts of these religious pundits. They regard them to be sinners whatever they may do. If the believers had lost in this battle, their defeat would have proved to the Quraysh that they were on the wrong. Now that they have won the battle, capturing prisoners and accepting ransom and using it is a proof that they are on the wrong. The only way to deal with these people is to disregard them and consume from the victories God has destined for them.

It may be kept in mind that in those days the monastic concept of religion prevailed. Hence it cannot be ruled out that many pious believers would have been influenced by this propaganda. This could in turn have adversely affected the zeal for *jihād* – to which they were being invited in this *sūrah* – of the Muslims. By refuting it, the Qur’ān ended any possibility of this taking place.

The implication of “and keep fearing God; indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful” is that the believers should consume what it is permissible and pure; however, they must keep fearing God lest they stumble into something that has been prohibited by Him. If they do not cross the limits set by Him, their minor sins will be forgiven by Him because He is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَن فِي آيِدِيكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَمْثِلِ ۖ إِنَّ يَّعْلَمَ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَ



اللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

These verses convey a message to the prisoners of Badr as is evident. They have been set free instead of being executed. Hence they must be thankful to God and His prophet instead of being sorrowful. A great favour has been done to them and as a result they must once again review their attitude. Instead of being emotional, they must rationally and justly reflect on whatever has happened. If they do this, they will value this favour from God and this will direct God's mercy and grace to them. They will be given far greater in the form of Islam than what has been taken from them in the form of this ransom. Their sins will be forgiven.

The words “and if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God; thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise” sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and threaten the prisoners of Badr. While addressing the Prophet (sws), it is said that if the Quraysh show treachery and do not value his favour to them, and come again to fight, they will not succeed. They themselves will be doomed. Before this, they betrayed God and were punished by the hands of the believers. If they repeat this, they will again be defeated by the believers and they will suffer the punishment of this betrayal. Details of the betrayal referred to here have been point to earlier. God made them the guardian of His House and consigned to them the inheritance of the religion of Abraham (sws); however, they violated the sanctity of this House and distorted this religion. The consequences of this are before them. If they want to continue to go further in their crime, it is their choice; they will taste its fruit.

If both these verses are deliberated upon, one thing becomes clear: if the Prophet (sws) released the prisoners of the battle of Badr by taking ransom, then this was not only not objected to by God, it was, in fact, liked by Him. The Prophet (sws) was asked by Him to let these prisoners know that if they value this favour done to them, it will open the way to Islam and forgiveness for them. This is the correct interpretation of the verses. It is totally different than the one presented in certain narratives found in *tafsīr* books. These narratives say that the verses actually admonish the Prophet (sws) for capturing prisoners and accepting ransom for them without fully shedding blood in the land.

Section VIII: Verses (72-75)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. Believers are told to come together as a single unit. The criteria in this regard should be their faith and migration

53. O Prophet! Inform the captives in your possession: If God sees something good in your hearts, He shall grant you that which is better than what has been taken from you and shall forgive your sins. And God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God. Thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise.



to Madīnah. These two things should also be the basis of their mutual help and support. Relations that existed before the advent of Islam in the *jāhiliyyah* society of Arabia were terminated forthwith. It was said that those who accept faith, migrate to Madīnah, start to live here and fight with the believers against the disbelievers are actually brothers and friends of one another. In other words, the believers were directed to organize the Islamic society on its distinctive foundations and features. The purpose was to unite the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* in solid defence against the union of the disbelievers. Believers are also roused to undertake war against them. This directive together with a preparation of war is also the prelude to the declaration of acquittal announced in the next *sūrah*.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَهَاجَرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجَرُوا ۚ وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرْتُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ النَّصْرُ ۖ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ ۖ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ۖ وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

Those who accepted faith and migrated and fought with their persons and wealth for the cause of God and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they are the ones who are friends of one another. As for those who accepted faith, but did not migrate, you can have no relationship of help and support with them until they migrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of religion, helping them is mandatory upon you except if the help is against a nation with whom you have a treaty. And God is watching whatever you do. And those who denied the truth are helpers and supporters of one another. So, if you do not do this, there will be persecution in the land and great disorder. And those who accepted faith, migrated and waged *jihād* for the cause of God, and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they who are true believers. For them are forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. And those who accepted faith after this and migrated and participated with you in *jihād*, they too are among you. And blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God. Indeed, God knows everything. (72-75)

Explanation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ



بَعْضُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ وَلَايَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ
النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِاتَّعْلُونَ بِصِيرٌ ۝⁵⁴

Before the advent of Islam, the basis of mutual help and support was one's family and tribe. If a person or a family was threatened with some danger, his family or tribe would go to the last limit to defend him. The bases of help and support in the society which Islam created in Madīnah were faith and migration to Madīnah.

Obviously the words “those who migrated” refer to the *muhājirūn* and “those who gave refuge” refer to the *anṣār*. Both these groups are alluded to with regard to their traits and religious services and are not referred to by their actual names. This is an indication to the fact that in this new society, instead of family and lineage, the real reason of preference would be faith, migration and *jihād*. These groups would be helpers and supporters of one another. Obviously, this help and support would be against the disbelievers. Though the style of verse is like a statement of fact; it also implies a command. In other words, the believers are directed to help and support one another against the disbelievers and do the needful when the situation arises.

Believers have no responsibility of helping those who did not migrate even after accepting faith. The reason obviously was that it would have been practically not possible to do so. Also many international complications could also have arisen. Moreover, at that time it was essential that all those who had accepted faith should leave the abodes of disbelievers and gather in Madīnah. This was because they could be organized to put an end to the persecution let loose by the disbelievers and to have the House of God liberated from their clutches. However, in this case too treaties must be honoured. The words “and God is watching whatever you do” are meant to emphasize the sanctity of a treaty. In other words, whatever step is taken to violate the treaty whether openly or secretly is in God's knowledge.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَهْدِهِمْ أَوْيَاءَ بَعْضٌ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ ۝⁵⁵

This verse states the reason why it is essential to help the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers. It is stated that as far as enmity with Muslims and Islam is concerned, all disbelievers are united. It is a matter of reward for them to persecute

54. Those who accepted faith and migrated and fought with their persons and wealth for the cause of God and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they are the ones who are friends of one another. As for those who accepted faith, but did not migrate, you can have no relationship of help and support with them until they migrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of religion, helping them is mandatory upon you except if the help is against a nation with whom you have a treaty. And God is watching whatever you do.

55. And those who denied the truth are helpers and supporters of one another. So, if you do not do this, there will be persecution in the land and great disorder. .



and harass any person who accepts Islam. Matters have reached the state that the honour of their own brethren to save them from the clutches of the oppressor has dashed to ground. Their lives and wealth have now become legal for consumption. If in such a situation, even Muslims do not help these people, it will mean that in order to persecute people oppression and injustice will become rampant in the land.

The antecedent of the pronoun in *لَا تَفْعَلُوا* is the help mentioned as *فَعَلَيْكُمْ النَّصْرُ* in the previous verse.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجْهَهُدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ٥٦

This verse regards migration to Madīnah as the barometer of the veracity of faith of the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers. It is evident from the words of this verse that it is the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* who are the real treasure of Islam. As for those who have professed faith but have not migrated from this territory, it is essential that they migrate to Madīnah and participate in *jihād* equally with the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* in order to prove that they have true faith. The purpose of migration also becomes evident from this that I have indicated earlier: to organize the believers for *jihād*. Another evident indication is that migration is a benchmark between faith and hypocrisy. Thus it will become clear from Sūrah al-Tawbah, the next *sūrah* that those who laid claim to faith but without any legitimate excuse did not migrate right until the end shall be regarded among the hypocrites.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوا وَجْهَهُدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ۖ وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ٥٧

This verse urges the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers to migrate to Madīnah and obtain a position of honour for themselves. At the same time, it emphasizes upon the believers living in Muslim territories to welcome the immigrants; they are their brothers and part of their collectivity. Neither should they regard themselves to be superior to them nor have any ill-will against them.

The words “and blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God” refer to the special principle of rights and inheritance that exists between blood relations. This is in contrast to the general principle of brotherhood and help mentioned earlier. The implication is that the rights of blood relations prescribed by God will continue as

56. And those who accepted faith, migrated and waged *jihād* for the cause of God, and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they who are true believers. For them are forgiveness and an honourable sustenance.

57. And those who accepted faith after this and migrated and participated with you in *jihād*, they too are among you. And blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God. Indeed, God knows everything.



before. This new brotherhood will not change them in any way. Blood relations are qualified by the clause “in the law of God.” This means that the rights referred to are the ones that ensue from blood and kinship and which are mentioned in the law of God. They exclude the ones that existed in the *jāhiliyyah* society of Arabia. At other instances in the Qur’ān too, where the believers have been directed to be kind to their brethren in faith and to help them, it is stated there that the legal rights of the blood relatives will always be superior. Thus in verse 6 of Sūrah Aḥzāb, it is stated: وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا.⁵⁸

The words “indeed, God knows everything” refer to the fact that God’s knowledge is perfect and He has prescribed a place and status of everything. Religious brotherhood and relations have their own sphere and blood relations have their own significance. Both should be respected in their own specifics and their rights should be discharged.

If this section of verses is deliberated upon, some principles of an Islamic state can be gauged which have both national and international import. They are referred to here briefly:

1. The *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* are friends and compatriots of one another. They are connected to one another on the basis of faith and migration. It is because of these two foundations that they have rights and responsibilities related to brotherhood and mutual help. Previously this connection was due to tribal interests. It stood abolished. Now mutual help was to be based on Islamic brotherhood.

2. Those who have professed faith but have not migrated to Madīnah from their territory among the disbelievers will not be helped until they migrate.

3. If believers living in the territory of the disbelievers are persecuted, helping them is essential unless they are at war with a nation with whom the believers have a treaty.

4. Migration was made incumbent on every believer so that they can be organized to wage war against the disbelievers,

5. The rights prescribed by the Qur’ān regarding blood relations will always remain superior to the ones that Islamic brotherhood entail.

This brings us to an end of the explanation of this *sūrah*. وَأَخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
19 February 1969

58. And that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book.