

Sūrah al-Tawbah

This *sūrah* is the last one of chapter 2. Its relationship with Sūrah al-Anfāl, the previous *sūrah* is the same as what a text has with its explanation or what a premise has with its real objective. A declaration is made in it of the *jihād* for which Muslims were organized in Sūrah Anfāl. In the arrangement of the Qur'ān the formulaic basmallah is not written at its beginning and it is evident from certain narratives that this lack of mention has been handed down since the times of the Prophet (sws). This shows that it was done at the behest of God. Our exegetes have explained this in various ways. The most convincing of these in my opinion is the one which says that there is very a close proximity between the theme and subject matter of the two *sūrahs* and at the same time both are distinct from one another with regard to their objective. The first of these is directed entirely to the Muslims and the second primarily to the Idolaters, People of the Book and the Hypocrites. The first one prepares the Muslims for war and the second gives an ultimatum for war and declares it. In order to distinguish both these common and diverse aspects, the wisdom of God entailed that this *sūrah* should not be totally separated from the previous one and at the same time be distinct from it too. Both these aspects become evident by not writing the *basmallah*. It has been pointed out at other instances that the *basmallah* acts as a divider between two *sūrahs*. By not being present here, the proximity of the two with regard to their meaning becomes evident and at the same time, the independent nature of this *sūrah* gives it a new name which becomes a means of its distinctive nature too.

Analysis of Meanings

First a declaration of acquittal is sounded from the Idolaters who had struck agreements with the Prophet (sws) that ensured peace but they made them null and void by breaking them. For those who had honoured their agreements, it was announced that once their time-period expires, they will not be renewed and war shall be waged against them until they accept Islam.

After this, it was declared regarding the People of the Book that war should also be waged against them until they become subservient or are forced to pay *jizyah*.

After this, the Hypocrites are taken to task until the end of the *sūrah* and Muslims are directed to sternly hold them accountable; no softness should be shown to them so that either they become true believers or reach the fate of the Idolaters or the People of the Book – depending on which of them they associate themselves with.

At that time, it was these three groups which were the open or hidden enemies of the Muslims. These groups were mentioned in the previous *sūrah* also but no ultimate policy was given about them. However, in this *sūrah*, this policy is clearly stated.

This brief look at contents is enough to show the sequence of discussion in this *sūrah*. Yet, a detailed analysis is done in the following paragraphs too.

Verses (1-4): Acquittal is sounded from the Idolaters who had overtly or covertly broken their agreements. They are given a respite of four months and Muslims are directed to proclaim this at the time of *hajj* that God and His Messenger (sws) are now absolved from the responsibility of these agreements, If these Idolaters repent, it is better for them. If they do not, they should remember that they are not beyond God's grasp. Only those Idolaters are an exception to this directive who did not break their agreements and also not helped the enemies of the Muslims against them. These agreements will continue until their specified period.

Verses (5-6): Muslims are directed to wage war against them after the sacred months are over. They should lie in ambush for them, seize and kill them and not let them go until they repent, show diligence in the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. However, if anyone of them seeks refuge, he should be granted so much refuge as he can hear the word of God. He should then be transported to his abode of safety. This concession is given to them because they have not been recipients of God's Book. It is possible that they may have not heard it.

Verses (7-16): Muslims are told that no new agreement can now be made with the Idolaters. Reasons for this are cited. The treaty which was struck with the Quraysh near the Sacred Mosque should be left intact. It should continue as long as they honour it. If they break it, Muslims must also wage war against these leaders of disbelief. Some grave crimes of the Quraysh are pointed to. Muslims are given glad tidings that they should not fear them; they should fight them; through them God will soothe oppressed Muslims who are the targets of their aggression.

Verses (17-22): The Idolaters of Quraysh have no right to remain the custodians of the House of God. Only they have this right who have belief in God and in the Hereafter, adhere to the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. To provide pilgrims with drinking water and look after the mosque of God are deeds of virtue but they cannot substitute belief in the Hereafter and war for the cause of God.

Verses (23-28): Muslims are warned that waging war against the Idolaters should be desisted from if they are related to them in family ties. They who give preference to such ties over the requisites of faith deserve to be counted among them. The love of God and His Prophet (sws) holds priority over everything. Muslims are reminded of a lesson from earlier wars and from the war of Hunayn: the real thing is God's help. Thus on God should they actually rely. It is declared that the Idolaters are unclean. For this reason, after this year, they should not be allowed to come near the Sacred Mosque. Muslims are assured that God will generously compensate them for any financial losses they may incur as a result.

Verses (29-35): Muslims are directed to wage war against the People of the Book and make them *dhimmīs* and exact the *jizyah* from them. Some references are made to the evils found in their beliefs and morals. The unworthy character and animosity against Islam of their scholars and sages are alluded to.

Verses (36-37): It is emphasized upon the Muslims that though this war against the Idolaters should be in the collective capacity, concession should be shown to none of their groups. However, sacred months must be given due respect. These sacred lunar months are the remnants of the religion of Abraham (sws). If they violate their sanctity, Muslims would be guilty of being unjust to their own souls. The religious innovation of Nasī' is pointed to and it is said that it has displaced these months from their actual calendar and linked them with the seasons and this is an increase in disbelief. Muslims must maintain the sanctity of these four months which have been prescribed by God from the very beginning on the basis of the lunar calendar.

Verses (38-42): The Hypocrites are warned that if they try to evade the directive of *jihād*, they will not harm God in any way; they will only be unjust to their own souls. God can replace them with others to help His religion. They should remember that there was a day in the past when God's Messenger had sought refuge in a cave and had only a single companion with him. Yet there came a day when God sent down His tranquillity, helped him with His own forces, disbelief was routed and the word of God prevailed. Thus God does not need human beings for this purpose. It is their own good fortune that they should wage war with whatever resources they may have.

An example is then given of the Hypocrites using false oaths to evade participating in *jihād*.

Verses (43-46): The Prophet (sws) is lovingly chided since he accepted the false excuses of those who wanted to desist from *jihād* even though they were Hypocrites. They can arrange for the resources to go put for *jihād* but they make false excuses taking advantage of his softness.

Verses (47-52): God's Messenger (sws) is assured that if these Hypocrites have not joined him for *jihād*, it is actually in his favour. If they had gone, they would have spread some mischief or the other. They are not well-wishers of the Muslims in any way. They want some calamity to strike them come what may.

Verses (53-57): Whatever the Hypocrites spend for the cause of religion carries no weight in the eyes of God. They deny God and His Prophet (sws) and their spending and their prayer are merely for pretence. The Prophet (sws) is directed to not give any importance to their wealth or their companionship. These cowards cannot be his companions.

Verses (58-60): A group of the Hypocrites is referred to which were with the Prophet (sws) as long as they had their share in charity money. If they received the amount that pleased them, they would be happy and if not, they would utter all kinds of evil things. After that, the real recipients of charity are enlisted.

Verses (61-66): The miscreants among these Hypocrites are referred to who would

spread propaganda against the Prophet (sws). They would contend that he is gullible and make fun of his opinions and insights in front of people. When called to account, they would swear false oaths and present ridiculous excuses.

Verses (67-70): The character of men and women among the Hypocrites is depicted along with their fate in this world and the next.

Verses (71-72): The character of men and women among the believers is depicted along with their success in the hereafter.

Verses (73-78): The Prophet (sws) is told to be stern with these Hypocrites like the disbelievers so that they are no longer able to cling to Islam by taking advantage of his softness. They hide their disbelief behind their false oaths. God's grace and the Prophet's softness have made them more audacious in their enmity for Islam. They have gone back on their promises and this has actually increased them in their hypocrisy.

Verses (79-84): A prank of the Hypocrites is referred to: they themselves do not spend for the cause of God and if the sincere servants of God spent out of their hard-earned wealth, they make fun of them and discourage them. In a similar way, they would not go out for *jihād* and try to discourage those who went out for it by citing adverse weather for this. God's warning about them is stated and the Prophet (sws) is stopped from seeking forgiveness for them.

Verses (85-96): The false excuses of those who were desisting from following what religion demands from them are alluded to. The character of true believers is depicted. People whose excuses are worthy of acceptance are detailed out. Those having lame excuses are threatened that even if they succeed in deceiving the Prophet (sws) and his companions because of their false excuses, this would never be of benefit to them. Their excuses cannot deceive God Who knows the hidden and the apparent.

Verses (97-101): The Hypocrites among the Bedouins are alluded to and the sincere among them are encouraged. The foremost in faith (*sābiqūn*) and those who follow them are praised. The Hypocrites among the Bedouins and in Madīnah are warned.

Verses (102-106): Glad tidings of acceptance of repentance of those people are mentioned who had changed their attitude after these warnings. The Prophet (sws) is directed to further train and instruct them and to pray for them. Forgiveness of some among this group is deferred.

Verses (107-110): A very harsh warning is sounded to those who had built the Ḍarār mosque. The Prophet (sws) is stopped from praying in it.

Verses (111-113): An explanation of the covenant between God and the believers and its true requisites are mentioned.

Verses (114-116): The Prophet (sws) and the believers are stopped from praying for forgiveness for those who die as Idolaters, even if they are closely related. The nature of the prayer of forgiveness which Abraham (sws) made for this father is explained.

Verses (117-118): Glad tidings are given for the general acceptance of repentance for the Prophet and all sincere *muhājirūn* and *anṣār*. People whose repentance had been

deferred in verse 106 is now accepted once they had totally made amends for it.

Verses (119-122): The people of Madīnah and the Bedouins are urged to sincerely and uprightly follow the Prophet (sws) and even sacrifice their lives if needed. Any small or big hardship they may suffer for this cause will earn them great reward. The Bedouins are directed that each of their groups should select people for the purpose of training and keep sending them to the Prophet (sws) so that after learning from him, they return and educate and instruct their own people.

Verses (123-129): A general directive is given to the Muslims: everyone of them should wage war against the disbelievers of their territory. Those who desist from facing the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) are referred to. A great mercy was sent to the world in the form of the Prophet (sws). People are urged to duly value it. He is told to trust God alone and ignore those who do not value his guidance.

A glance at this analysis shows that each section of this *sūrah* is coherently and meaningfully arranged and is related to one other in a very natural way from the very beginning to the end.

With God's help and grace, I now begin with the explanation of the *sūrah*.

Section 1: (1-28)

Text and Translation

بَرَاءَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۖ فَسِينَحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخَيِّرُ الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ ﴿١﴾ وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۖ وَرَسُولُهُ ۚ فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۖ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۖ ﴿٣﴾ فَإِذَا انسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُواهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۖ ﴿٤﴾ وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْبَغَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ابْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۖ ﴿٥﴾ كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۖ ﴿٦﴾ كَيْفَ وَ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ يُرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ۖ ﴿٧﴾

اِشْتَرَوْا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدَّوْا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَا يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢﴾ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَإِنْ تَكْشَرُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَيْمَةَ الْكُفْرِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أَلَا تَقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَشُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَبُوا بِأَخْرَاجِ الرُّسُولِ ۚ وَهُمْ بَدَّءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ أَنْتُمْ خَشِيتُكُمْ ۚ قَالَ اللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥﴾ قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِيهِمْ وَيُنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۖ وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً ۖ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِم بِالْكَفْرِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ ۖ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْشَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُتَهَدِّينَ ﴿١٠﴾ أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْظَمَ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُقِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ إِنَّ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذْهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا ۚ

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾

A declaration of acquittal is made from God and His Messenger for these Idolaters with whom you had made agreements. So, walk about now in this land for four months and know that you cannot escape God's grasp and that God shall certainly humiliate the disbelievers. And a general declaration should also be made among people from God and His Messenger on the day of the great *hajj* that God and His Messenger are free from obligations to the Idolaters. Now, if you people repent, it is better for you, and if you turn away, bear in mind that you cannot run away from God. And give tidings of a painful torment to the disbelievers. Those Idolaters are an exception from this declaration of acquittal with whom you have made an agreement and who did not dishonour it and did not support anyone against you. So, honour their agreements to the end of their terms. God likes those who abstain from breaking promises. Thus, when the sacred months have passed, kill these Idolaters wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. Then if they repent and are diligent in the prayer, and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. Indeed, God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if any of these Idolaters seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum so that he is able to hear the word of God. Then take him to his place of safety. This is because these are a people who do not know the words of God. (1-6)

How can the responsibility of an agreement with these Idolaters remain with God and His Messenger? – Yes, those with whom you had made an agreement near the Sacred Mosque. So, as long as they abide by it, you also abide by it for them. God befriends those who abstain from breaking promises – how can it remain when if at some instance they overpower you, they neither give regard to any familial ties nor any agreement with you? They want to satisfy you through words of their mouth but their hearts are denying and their majority does not keep their promises. They have accepted a very paltry price in exchange for God's revelations, and in this way, they have stopped from God's path. Indeed, very evil is what they are doing. In the matter of a believer, they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise, and they are the ones who commit excesses. So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion. And We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know. (7-11)

And if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion, then fight also these leaders of disbelief. Their words and promises have no significance so that they abstain from their misdeeds. So, how can you not fight such people who break their promises and had the audacity to expel the messenger, and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you. Would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers. Fight them; God will punish them through your hands, humiliate them and grant you dominance, soothe the hearts of one group of the believers and eliminate the sorrow

and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. God is All-Knowing, Wise. (12-15)

Do you think that you will be left like this even though God has not as yet separated those among you who waged *jihād* and did not befriend anyone except God, His Messenger and the believers? And whatever you are doing is fully in the knowledge of God. The Idolaters do not have the right to manage the mosques of God even though they are witness to their own disbelief. All their deeds have gone waste and shall abide forever in Hell. Only those people should manage God's mosques who believe in God and the last day, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and do not fear anyone except God. It is hoped that these people shall succeed. Have you equated providing water to the pilgrims and managing the Sacred Mosque to the deeds of those who professed faith in God and the Last Day and who waged *jihād* for the cause of God? The two cannot be equal in the sight of God. God will not guide unjust people. High is the status with God of those who professed faith, migrated and waged *jihād* through their persons and wealth for the cause of God and it is they who shall succeed. Their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours. They shall abide in them forever. Indeed, with God lies a great reward. Believers! Do not befriend your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to belief. And those of you who befriend them shall be ones who are unjust to their own selves. Tell them: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your family, the wealth you have earned, the trade whose loss you fear, and the homes you like are dearer to you than God, His Messenger and *jihād* for His cause, then wait until God delivers His Judgement and God does not guide people who break their promises. Indeed, God has helped you at many instances. And on the day of Hunayn 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 narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away. Ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers and sent down such armies which you did not see and punished the disbelievers and precisely this is the punishment of the disbelievers. Then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (16-27)

Believers! These Idolaters are absolutely impure. So, they must not even come near the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs and if you fear poverty, then if God wills, He shall soon make you rich through His grace. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and All-Wise. (28)

Explanation

بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَسِينَحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَدْبَعَةً أَشْهُرٍ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ

مُعْجِزِىَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِىُ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝^١

The word بِرَاءَةٌ means to become absolved from a responsibility. Here it refers to acquittal from agreements and treaties made by the Prophet (sws) with various tribes of the Idolaters after his migration to Madīnah. Some of them were time-barred and some were not. The word الْمُشْرِكِينَ here and wherever else in the Qur'ān it is used as a proper noun refers to the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites or in other words, the Idolaters of Arabia. The reason for acquittal from these agreements is stated in verse 3 ahead. Many tribes had made these agreements but were not abiding by them with sincerity and uprightness. Thus such agreements were declared null and void. Only agreements of those tribes were kept intact who had not broken them and that too to their period of expiry.

In the first verse, the preposition occurs إِلَى after بِرَاءَةٌ. This signifies that the verb “communicate” is encompassed in this construction. In other words, it would mean that the declaration of acquittal be communicated to all the tribes who had broken their agreements. Thus the very next verse has also specified this.

Here, one noteworthy thing is that God has imposed the responsibility of making agreements on Muslims, as is evident from the word عَاهِدْتُمْ because a responsibility taken up by the Prophet (sws) is a responsibility taken up by all Muslims. However, regarding the acquittal, the responsibility of the Muslims is not specified as to what exactly they need to do. This actually shows the intensity of the declaration of acquittal. In other words, when God and His Messenger have declared their acquittal, Muslims should themselves decide if they want to align themselves with God and His Messenger and thereby testify to having faith in them or if they would like to adopt hypocrisy by giving regard to kinship, brotherhood, family and tribal ties. The reason for adopting this style, as will be shortly stated, was that the hypocrites among the Muslims by that time were not fully detached from their family and tribal relationships. This style makes it evident to them that this decision of God and His Messenger is certain and there is no possibility of any lenience in it. If they want to side by it, they can; otherwise, they can go their own way.

While the first verse was directed at the Muslims, the second directly addresses the Idolaters. This change shows that this threat should not be taken casually. It is a decisive threat of which the results will now manifest themselves with full certainty. It is not that Muslims are addressed and told that they should convey this acquittal to the Idolaters. So, just as in the first verse, the declaration of acquittal was directly made by God, in the second, one the Idolaters are directly addressed by Him and given a respite of four months. After that, no responsibility of agreements that have been

1. A declaration of acquittal is made from God and His Messenger for these Idolaters with whom you had made agreements. So, walk about now in this land for four months and know that you cannot escape God's grasp and that God shall certainly humiliate the disbelievers.

dishonoured would remain on God and His Messenger: people who have made them wwill be seized at every step.

There could be many expedencies in the respite of 4 months. For example, those who were playing pranks in spite of making agreements could be afforded the opportunity to rethink their ways. Also, Muslims be able to fully devote and prepare themselves for the onslaught they needed to launch later. Moreover, it is also evident from verse 5 ahead that the Sacred Months were approaching in which no military campaign could be carried out.

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ فَإِنْ تُبْتِغُوا فَهَوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ
 إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَوُا أَنتُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۝²

The word أَذَانٌ here is used literally to connote a declaration. This declaration was supposed to be made at *hajj* because it was the only gathering in Arabia in which people from all nooks and corners would gather. Whatever would be announced there would spread all over the country. Until 9 AH, the Idolaters would go for *hajj* and hence any declaration made would have reached all those back home too, whether Muslims or not. It is for this reason a general word النَّاسِ (the people) is used in the verse.

What does *hajj-i akbar* mean and which year's *hajj* does it refer to are questions which our exegetes have answered. They say that it refers to the *hajj* of 9 AH that was offered under the leadership of Abū Bakr (rta). I agree with their opinion because this was the first occasion in which Muslims were able to offer it. Prior to this, they did have a few opportunities but they could only offer '*umrah*, which is also called *hajj-i asghar* (mini *hajj*). It is in this connection that for the complete *hajj* the word *hajj-i akbar* is used. As such, Muslims were given glad tidings that until then they were only able to offer the mini *hajj*; soon, they will offer the complete *hajj*.

It is in this background that people have deduced the period of revelation of this *sūrah* to be 9 AH. However, I am hesitant in accepting this deduction. This is because it is evident from the succeeding verses that these verses and those coming after them were revealed after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah and a little before the conquest of Makkah. However, since this declaration of acquittal was made in 9 AH, people thought that these verses were revealed at this time. The fact is that it was a directive revealed beforehand.

It is difficult for me to determine the period of revelation of these verses. This is because before the departing *hajj* of the Prophet (sws), two calendars existed in Arabia. One of them was the lunar one and the other was based on the principle of

2. And a general declaration should also be made among people from God and His Messenger on the day of the great *hajj* that God and His Messenger are free from obligations to the Idolaters. Now, if you people repent, it is better for you, and if you turn away, bear in mind that you cannot run away from God. And give tidings of a painful torment to the disbelievers.

Nasīy that will be referred to later in the *sūrah*. If someone is able to determine the difference in months between these two, he would be able to determine these four months mentioned in verse 2 as well as the sacred months mentioned in verse 5 ahead. In this research, a guiding point can be that the *hajj* offered by the Prophet (sws) in 10 AH was offered exactly on 9th of Dhū al-ḥijjah, keeping in view the lunar calendar and with regard to the principle of Nasīy, it was precisely this date too. It is evident that both calendars agreed here. In the narrative: الرِّمَازُ قَدْ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (time has returned to its original format to what it was when the heavens and the earth were created),³ the Prophet (sws) has pointed to this fact. Though I am not a person with any expertise in mathematics and time measurements, I am satisfied in the light of the words and coherence of the Qur'ān that these verses were revealed a little before the truce of Ḥudaybiyah. Arguments in favour of this will shortly follow.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ لَمْ يَنْقُصْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤﴾

This is a reference to those Idolaters who were an exception to the declaration of acquittal. These were tribes who had honoured the agreements made with them; they had neither taken any small or big step in violation of these agreements nor helped others directly or indirectly against the Muslims. However, their agreements would only continue until their specified time periods. Once these periods expired, they would be null and void and not renewed. Thus after this declaration the Prophet (sws) never made any agreement with any group of the Idolaters. The reason was that all the agreements with them were made on the basis of the requisites of preaching and conclusive communication of the truth. They were never made for a permanent basis. God's established practice mentioned at several instances in this exegesis is that if a nation towards which a messenger is sent persists in denying him even after the truth has become evident to it, then it is destroyed. This destruction could be through natural disasters or through the swords of the disbelievers. Same was the case of the Idolaters of Arabia. The phase of preaching and conclusive communication of truth was reaching its end. Thus there was no reason to make any agreement with any of their groups.

The *تقرى* mentioned in the last part of the verse refers to the collective one and not the individual one. Islam requires both these to be fulfilled by its followers. In other words, Muslims must sincerely abide by the agreements they make with other nations and

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1168, (no. 3025).

4. Those Idolaters are an exception from this declaration of acquittal with whom you have made an agreement and who did not dishonour it and did not support anyone against you. So, honour their agreements to the end of their terms. God likes those who abstain from breaking promises.

must never go back on their word even in the slightest way. It is such God-fearing people who are friends of God and such people always succeed in this world and the next.

فَإِذَا انسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُواهُمْ وَاحْصِرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ ۚ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

The sacred months are Dhū al-Qa‘dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab. The expression الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ is used as a title for them. No other months can be taken to be implied in any way. They were regarded to be sacred even before the coming of Islam. In fact, they were regarded so since the time of Abraham (sws). I have explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah that they were the months in which *hajj* and *‘umrah* were offered and the majority of financial travels of the Arabs were also done by caravans in these months. War was legally prohibited during them and in spite of their militant temperaments, the Arabs honoured this condition. In verse 2, the respite given for four months includes three sacred ones – three because the four sacred months do not occur consecutively. The month of Rajab occurs separately. Because of the principle of Naṣī employed by the Arabs, these months were displaced from their actual position. However if the month of Shawwāl from the prior months was added to them, they become four. The expression “wherever you find them” means that they can even be killed in the bounds of Ḥaram. In other words, they were not to be spared any where. Such an all-embracing nature of onslaught was launched because this was not merely a military step taken against the enemy, it was the manifestation of an established practice of God for the Idolaters of Arabia which manifests itself for people who deny their respective messengers. Details of this practice have been mentioned in Sūrah al-A‘rāf.

This onslaught should not be stopped until they repent from their disbelief and polytheism and observe the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. The latter two form a comprehensive expression of entering in the system of worship and obedience of Islam. This would mean that without accepting Islam, they could neither live as Dhimmīs or Mu‘āhids nor as slave men or women. They only had two options: either accept Islam or face death.

This reason for this special treatment of the Idolaters of Arabia is the same as has been referred to earlier: God had sent a messenger from among them and sent down a book to them in their own language and invited them to the way of Abraham (sws) which they claimed to be adherents of. This messenger warned them consecutively for

5. Thus, when the sacred months have passed, kill these Idolaters wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. Then if they repent and are diligent in the prayer, and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. Indeed, God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving.

23 years and tried to wake them up from their slumber. He came to all their gatherings and knocked at every door. He answered all their objections and cleared all their doubts. He countered all their allegations and their enmities. He even showed them miracles at their demand and showed the truth to conform to their standards. Finally, all good people among them became his companions. Why should the rest be allowed to live after all this profound arrangement of delivering the truth to them if they persisted in its denial? A messenger is the perfect and last means of conclusive communication of the truth. Those who do not wake up by his calls are dead and what is best for the dead is to bury them.

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ابْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

This verse states the last concession given to the Idolaters at the time of the onslaught mentioned earlier. This directive was not any permanent respite given to them. It was only a final chance given to them to weigh the outcome of their denial. If such a person does not accept faith, he will face execution and this temporary asylum would not prove to be of any benefit to him. The chance of any further asylum will also not remain for him.

The last part of the verse states why this concession was given to them: they were an unlettered people who were not conversant with Books of God and His messengers. Thus there was a chance that in spite of this long period of 23 years, something was still amiss in the conclusive communication of the truth. Hence this concession was warranted. It was given even though there was a chance that someone may misuse it.

كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عٰهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧﴾ كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا ذِمَّةً ۖ يُرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾

These verses state the reasons for the declaration of acquittal. Though the address is

6. And if any of these Idolaters seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum so that he is able to hear the word of God. Then take him to his place of safety. This is because these are a people who do not know the words of God.

7. How can the responsibility of an agreement with these Idolaters remain with God and His Messenger? – Yes, those with whom you had made an agreement near the Sacred Mosque. So, as long as they abide by it, you also abide by it for them. God befriends those who abstain from breaking promises – how can it remain when if at some instance they overpower you, they neither give regard to any familial ties nor any agreement with you? They want to satisfy you through words of their mouth but their hearts are denying and their majority does not keep their promises.

general, it is directed specially to those Muslims who still had relations and ties of kinship with the Idolaters and as a result of this declaration were in a fix. It had become to everyone as a result of this declaration that the days of the treaty of Hidaybiyah too were numbered. This treaty had paved the way of intermingling between the Quraysh and the Muslims. The faith of weak Muslims was naturally threatened by this declaration. They had ties with almost every family of the Quraysh and they had expected that this door to meeting them would remain open. They thought that in this way belief and disbelief would live together. This declaration not only ended these expectations once and for all but they also foresaw that the time of waging war with their relatives was drawing near. It is while keeping these people in consideration that the verse goes on to state its intent.

The construction of this verse needs deliberation. It begins with كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ. Once this sentence ends, the previous discourse is now taken up again and begun with the same word كَيْفَ. It continues until the verse ends.

Relationships are based on two things: social relationships are based on abiding by blood and familial ties and political relationships are based on fulfilling the responsibilities of mutual agreements. The first is referred to by the word إِلا. It refers to rights that are based on lineage and common ancestry or kinship and neighbourhood ties. The second is called ذِمَّة. It refers to the responsibilities imposed on the parties which have made an agreement. The verse consoles Muslims and tells them that they should not be worried if all social ties with the Idolaters are being severed for they were destined to be severed one day. One party cannot alone abide by an agreement. Those of them who hold these relationships dearer should fully understand that if these Idolaters are able to overcome them at any instance, they will neither give regard to blood ties nor agreements. They try to lure and fool Muslims through their sweet talk and superficially show sympathy. Their words betray their intent and their hearts are full of malice for Islam and its followers.

Just as they put up a false show of kinship, they also never honour their agreements and most of them are dishonest in this regard. The word فسق here is used for treason and for breaking of promises. This meaning of the word is commonly found in the Qur'ān. Just as the word تقوى earlier means honouring agreements, the word فسق here means breaking agreements.

The exception clause refers to the treaty of Hidaybiyah in my opinion. The arguments in favour of this opinion will become evident ahead but here there a noteworthy proof here too: it is introduced by the words “an agreement near the Sacred Mosque.” If any of the agreements made by the Prophet (sws) with the Idolaters can be identified in these words, it can only be this treaty. It is because it was this agreement that was made in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque. By referring to the

agreement with these words, it was introduced and in the second instance its extraordinary significance was also highlighted: it was an agreement made in the whereabouts of the Holy Mosque, which was the most sacred of places. It may be noted that the Arabs used to make agreements before the idols of their deities and altars in order to create feelings of respect between the parties.

No agreement however can be honoured by one party only. Hence if the Quraysh honour it, Muslims too should abide by it. However, if they break it, Muslims too should break it. This is the requisite of justice also and this is what Islam directs its followers to adhere to.

From the above mentioned verses, three things become evident regarding the agreements made by the Prophet (sws) until then with various groups of the Idolaters.

1. A declaration of acquittal was sounded to those Idolaters who had not honoured their agreements; they were given a respite of four months after which war would be waged against them.

2. The time-barred agreements of those tribes who had abided by them would not be extended once their time expired.

3. Muslims were told to abide by the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as long as the Quraysh would abide by it. It may be noted that this treaty did not have a time-bar and when these verses were revealed the Quraysh were barely being able to abide it. It is thus natural that this question must have arisen in many minds that what would happen to it once four months had passed. This point answers this question. It seems that it was during this time that the Quraysh violated this treaty by helping their ally Banū Bakr against the Banū Khuzā'ah which was an ally of the Muslims. It was a result of this that the Prophet (sws) attacked Makkah and conquered it.

اَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ لَا يَزِيدُ الْيَاقُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلاَ ذِمَّةً ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَأَخِانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ وَنُفِصِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾⁸

This is a further explanation of the declaration of acquittal: these Idolaters do not have the right relationship with their creator and their fellow brethren. These are people who take lead in breaking limits. How can God and His Messenger continue with their agreements with them? They will be treated as Muslim brethren if they fulfil the conditions stated. The last sentence “and We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know” is meant to admonish both the believers and the

8. They have accepted a very paltry price in exchange for God's revelations, and in this way, they have stopped from God's path. Indeed, very evil is what they are doing. In the matter of a believer, they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise, and they are the ones who commit excesses. So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion. And We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know.

disbelievers. In other words, those who want to know and understand, for them all directives of God in this regard have been explained and no ambiguity remains. Now, if there are those among Muslims want to separate themselves and strike a deal with the Idolaters, its responsibility rests with them. Similarly, if there are some among the Idolaters have different aspiration. Then they will be responsible for it.

وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَیَّهَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ أَلَا تَقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَبُوا بَايَاعِهِمُ الرِّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ أَتَخْشَوْنَ اللَّهَ أَحَقَّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِيهِمْ وَيُنْصِرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيُشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَ يُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

The first part of verse 12 “and if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion” relates to verse 7 above. It was stated there that as long as the people with whom a treaty was made in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque abide by it, believers too should abide by it. It is now being told that if these Quraysh break it, then the believers should fight these leaders of disbelief. Obviously the term “leaders of disbelief” can only be applied to the Quraysh because all the Arabs followed them in religion. It is they who held the reins of religious leadership. By using this title for the Quraysh, a strong argument of waging war against them was also presented: if they are the leaders of disbelief, then who else but they should the believers fight. It is they from whom poisonous allegations against Islam would originate and it was they who would mock and deride its followers. They were responsible for malicious propaganda against Islam. From them, all these nefarious activities would spread to others.

The sentence “their words and promises have no significance” is a parenthetical one. Thereafter what is stated is connected to the earlier sentence. What is implied is that soon they are bound to break their promise. When they do, the believers must wage war against them so that they desist from their pranks. This implies that they repent and accept Islam, as referred to earlier.

9. And if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion, then fight also these leaders of disbelief. Their words and promises have no significance so that they abstain from their misdeeds. So, how can you not fight such people who break their promises and had the audacity to expel the messenger, and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you. Would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers. Fight them; God will punish them through your hands, humiliate them and grant you dominance, soothe the hearts of one group of the believers and eliminate the sorrow and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. God is All-Knowing, Wise.

Verse 13 urges the believers to wage war against the Quraysh. Concomitant indications show that this verse was revealed a little later and the words of verse 12 “and if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word” show that the treaty still existed legally at least. However, the words “so, how can you not fight such people who break their promises” of verse 13 show that they had now violated the treaty. It was done by helping their ally against the ally of the Muslims, as pointed out earlier. Besides this violation, they were also guilty of expelling the messenger from Makkah. This crime is so grave that it entails divine punishment, as is indicated in previous *sūrahs*.

In other words, the implication is that would the Muslims evade waging war against those people who have become worthy of God’s wrath. They tried to expel God’s Messenger from his city, which in itself is a very serious crime. As for the actual reason for his migration, it was at God’s behest and wisdom. The words “and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you” show that they were not just audacious enough to expel the Messenger. The reference here is to the battle of Badr details of which have been mentioned earlier in *Sūrah al-Anfāl*. These words also show what I have explained earlier: it was the Quraysh who first attacked in the battle of Badr. They had only fashioned the excuse that they were protecting the trade caravan.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that all the above-mentioned crimes were primarily perpetrated by the Quraysh; hence these verses can only relate to them. This also corroborates the period of revelation of this *sūrah* expressed earlier.

The words “would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers” signify a general address; however, their direction of address is towards Muslims weak in faith and the hypocrites. These people were very scared of waging war with the Quraysh, as has been pointed out earlier with details forthcoming. The reason for this related more to their ties with the Quraysh rather than the war itself. They were not prepared at any cost to suddenly break these ties.

The words “fight them; God will punish them through your hands; humiliate them” are meant to encourage Muslims in general and the weak in faith among them in particular: they should not show any weakness in waging war with these leaders of disbelief. It has been explained earlier that God’s established practice about His messengers is that if nations deny their respective messenger, they migrate from them and the nation is necessarily destroyed. If the number of people who profess faith in a messenger is not substantial, then this punishment comes directly from God. If, on the other hand, they are in substantial numbers, then they are tasked with meting out God’s punishment to the disbelievers by their own hands and humiliating them. This humiliation is a special part of that punishment. This is because the real motive of their denial is arrogance and the punishment of arrogance is humiliation.

The words “soothe the hearts of one group of the believers” are meant to express affection to the Muslims who because of being helpless had become targets of the

oppression and callous practices of the Quraysh in Makkah. It may be kept in mind that to have anger for the enemies of Islam – to whom the truth had been conclusively delivered – in the heart is totally fine.

The words “and eliminate the sorrow and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; God is All-Knowing, Wise” subtly refer to the fact that there were still present among them people who would have the urge to repent and would accept faith. This is a type of glad tiding for Muslims who desired that relatives to accept faith. In “whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; God is All-Knowing, Wise,” there is a reference to God’s established practice regarding repentance and the urge to seek it. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis.

أَمَرَ حَسْبُكُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَكَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهِدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً^ط
وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ^{١٠}

The word *وَلِيجَةً* means “a confidant and a friend.”

It has been pointed out earlier that even though the address is general, it is directed at Muslims who still had ties with the Idolaters. For this reason, this declaration of acquittal had become a great trial. They are told that this trial is God’s established practice. Everyone who lays claim to faith necessarily passes through it. Though God is fully aware of everyone’s deeds, He continues to make them pass through these trials to sift the good from the evil. Hence if they think that merely laying claim to faith would be sufficient, they are gravely mistaken. Time has now come to test them and see who is really sincere in his faith in God and His Messenger and who is bluffing.

Here it needs to be specially noted that faith in God and in His Messenger is mentioned together. This shows that they are indivisible in this regard. He who claims to be sincere to God, should prove that he is sincere to His Messenger and to those who have professed faith in him. If anyone makes others besides the believers to be his friend and confidant, he is not a companion of God and His Messenger as well, however much he may vehemently claim it. This subject is coming up with great clarity in verses 23-24 ahead.

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْبُرُوا مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ^ط أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ^{١١} فِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ^{١٢}
إِنَّمَا يَعْبُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَى أُولَئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ^{١٣} أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَالْعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَنْزًا آمِنًا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَ

10. Do you think that you will be left like this even though God has not as yet separated those among you who waged *jihad* and did not befriend anyone except God, His Messenger and the believers? And whatever you are doing is fully in the knowledge of God.

جَهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجْهَهُدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْظَمَ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْقَائِمُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿١٩﴾ خُلِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾¹¹

In the earlier verses, the crimes perpetrated by the Idolaters of Quraysh were pointed out as a result of which the declaration of acquittal was sounded to them. Now, while referring to some of their services for the House of God, it is being explained that these services carry absolutely no weight. The Quraysh certainly do not deserve any lenience because of them. Any service or virtue is only acceptable if it is in line with the real objective. If the real objective is sacrificed, no partial virtue can be its substitute. If the custodian of a mosque turns it into a temple of idols, no credit can be given to him merely on the basis that he has made arrangements of food, water and lodging for the visitors. These arrangements in themselves are acts of virtue. But not as much that because of them his right of turning a mosque into a temple of idols be accepted and he continues as its custodian.

It may be kept in mind that the Quraysh were proud of these services and their other sympathizers too regarded them to be laudable. When war was declared against them, Muslims weak in faith thought that since they were custodians of the House of God, serve its needs and provided water to the pilgrims should deserve some lenience. They should not be treated so harshly as to give them just two options of either accepting faith or facing death. This mentality was not right. On the one hand, it provided an excuse to those who had rejected God's Messenger and on the other hand could have become a source of nurturing a very abhorrent type of hypocrisy in them. For this reason, the Qur'an corrected this mentality so that a wrong concept of religion does not creep into Muslims.

Consider next verse 18. The verb *يَعْمُرُ* means to build a house, to populate a land and to inhabit a house and run it." The Idolaters mentioned here in general terms actually refer to the Quraysh who were the custodians of the House of God. By mentioning

11. The Idolaters do not have the right to manage the mosques of God even though they are witness to their own disbelief. All their deeds have gone waste and shall abide forever in Hell. Only those people should manage God's mosques who believe in God and the last day, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and do not fear anyone except God. It is hoped that these people shall succeed. Have you equated providing water to the pilgrims and managing the Sacred Mosque to the deeds of those who professed faith in God and the Last Day and who waged *jihād* for the cause of God? The two cannot be equal in the sight of God. God will not guide unjust people. High is the status with God of those who professed faith, migrated and waged *jihād* through their persons and wealth for the cause of God and it is they who shall succeed. Their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours. They shall abide in them forever. Indeed, with God lies a great reward..

them as an attribute and not by name, the purpose was to make this directive general and make its cause known too. The expression “mosques of God” means the Sacred Mosque. Thus this has been explained in verse 19 too. Yet by using the plural the purpose is to show that this is not just the case of the Sacred Mosque; no mosque should be managed by the Idolaters. The House of God is the fountainhead and centre of all other mosques and their *qiblah*. If any disorder results in its management, it would mean that the centre of guidance and blessings has become contaminated.

The word disbelief here refers to their polytheism. By calling polytheisms as disbelief, this essence of religion is explained that believing in more than one god is like not believing in God. Only monotheistic belief in God is acceptable. There is absolutely no permissibility of believing in God while openly ascribing partners to Him. Regarding the Idolaters of Arabia, it should be kept in mind that it was not that their polytheism was the consequence of any of their beliefs and deeds. They had adopted it as a belief per se. It was an indivisible part of their concept of the divine. Obviously, people who are advocates of this disbelief should remain the custodians of a mosque that was the first of its kind in this world built on the concept of monotheism. It was also the *qiblah* of all mosques of God as well. Being the custodians of the House of God was not a virtue that could plead in their favour. It was, on the contrary, a great sin cleansing which was the foremost obligation of the believers.

The deeds referred to in the verse are the ones which people regarded as virtuous and acts of service. With polytheism, no virtue can be regarded as a virtue in reality. Hence the verse says that all their deeds will go waste and these people shall forever abide in Hell. In the sight of God, only that virtue is acceptable which is done while upholding monotheism. In previous scriptures, a polytheist is compared to an adulteress. Just as all the love and affection of such a woman is useless for her husband, similarly, a person's deeds will have no value if they are done while upholding polytheism.

Regarding the worthy custodians of the House of God, their attributes are spelled out; they were not named even though these attributes obviously applied to Muslims only. The reason for this was that this position of custodianship was not the monopoly of any family. All those who conformed to these attributes were eligible to it. The words “do not fear anyone except God” are meant to refute polytheism. “Fear” here obviously refers to the one that arises by regarding someone other than God to have the power to cause harm or benefit. It is this fear which is polytheism. In other words, here polytheism is refuted by its real motive. I have explained in my treatise “Essence of Polytheism” that the real motive of polytheism is fear.

In the sentence “it is hoped that these people shall succeed” the word “success” refers to reaching the destination. In other words, it is being said that only people who have the afore-mentioned attributes can be expected to reach the destination and be successful. The word “hope” here shows that this is no easy path. There will be hardships and trials in it at every step. Only those people can persevere on this straight path who have the provision

of God's grace with them and who seek help from God only.

In the expression كُنْ اَمِنَ بِاللّٰهِ, the governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed just as it is in verse 176 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اَمِنَ بِاللّٰهِ. The addressees are the same people who because of the custodianship of the Sacred Mosque and providing water and services to pilgrims regarded the Quraysh to be distinguished from others and thought they deserved concession.

In the sentence “God will not guide unjust people” the word “unjust” refers to the injustice of polytheism and guidance refers to the guidance regarding the destination. It has been explained earlier that virtues done with polytheism carry no weight before God and all hopes that may be pinned in their outcome shall be dashed to ground.

The expression “high is the status” is not meant for comparison; it is meant for magnification. In other words, people who adhere to faith and migrate and wage *jihād* have a high status before God. Just as it is stated in verse 212 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ (those who adopt piety will be above them on the Day of Judgement), here also the high status of the believers is mentioned regardless of the status of the disbelievers. The words “and it is they who shall succeed” are in contrast to “God will not guide unjust people.” In other words, the disbelievers and the idolaters will meet their painful doom in the Hereafter while the believers will succeed.

The words “their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours; they shall abide in them forever; indeed, with God lies a great reward” are a further explanation of “and it is they who shall succeed.”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَاُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ إِن كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسْكَنٌ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبُّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

Earlier in verse 16, it was stated that God does not like that people who lay claim to faith and also want to have ties of friendship with the Idolaters and disbelievers remain inter-mingled with the believers. Only they have true belief in God who wage war for his cause and not make anyone their confidant or friend in opposition to God

12. Believers! Do not befriend your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to belief. And those of you who befriend them shall be ones who are unjust to their own selves. Tell them: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your family, the wealth you have earned, the trade whose loss you fear, and the homes you like are dearer to you than God, His Messenger and *jihād* for His cause, then wait until God delivers His Judgement and God does not guide people who break their promises.

and His Messenger. This very topic is now discussed in these verses in a different style and in a very decisive tone before all Muslims so that everyone can choose his path and destination.

Verse 24 forms a final warning. All entities that a person loves are pointed out and it is told that if they are dearer to him than God and His Messenger and war for His cause, then he should wait for God's decision.

The meaning of something being more dear to a person than God and His Messenger means that when two contradictory demands comes before him – one from God and His Messenger and the other from the entities mentioned – a person disregards the first of these demands and prefers the second to it. This means that that thing is dearer to him than God and His Messenger and vice versa. Giving preference to them is the necessary requisite of faith. Without it, no claim to faith has any weight. It is a barometer through which a person can measure his love and faith in everyday life.

There is a subtle psychological sequence that is very evident in the list of things mentioned and held dear by people. Fathers, sons, brothers, wife and family are mentioned first. It is their love and bias which become a source of trial and hindrance for people in the cause of the truth. After that wealth, trade and assets are alluded to. These become attractions primarily with respect to the relations mentioned above and if a person does not have insight, they become a means of trial for him. Wealth is qualified by the word *اِكْتَرَفْنَاهَا*. The word *اِكْتَرَفَ* means “to earn.” This qualification shows the cherished nature of this merchandise. It is a common principle that the wealth that is earned and nurtured by a person himself is much more dear to him. Similarly, the word merchandise is qualified by the expression *تُخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا*. It refers to trade that is functioning well and is successful. This is because it is such a trade about which a businessman is always anxious that it should not lose its worth. To circumvent this danger, he takes all sorts of measures until he becomes a literal slave to his trade and worships it like a deity. At such a stage, what is allowed and disallowed to him neither remains of any importance to him nor can he bear the trials of migration, war and abstention from evil for the cause of God. It is stated that each of these is an idol and unless a person is prepared to smash every idol for the cause of God, he cannot fulfil the requisites of faith.

The words “then wait until God delivers His Judgement” sound a very stern warning. A great detail is hidden in this ambiguity. Earlier, the fate of the rejecters of messengers has been mentioned. The same evil fate awaits those who lay claim to faith but who want to ride the two boats of belief and disbelief simultaneously.

Just it was said regarding the Idolaters “God does not guide the unjust” here about this reluctant group the words used are “God does not guide those who break promises.” The Arabic words used are *وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ*. The word *فسق* means exiting faith. This shows that those who befriend the disbelievers instead of God and His Messenger leave faith in spite of laying claim to it.

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۖ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَصَافَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِسَآءًا رَحِبَتْ ثُمَّ لَئِيْتُمْ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

The words “indeed, God has helped you at many instances” are addressed to these hesitant people. They should not show reluctance in waging war because the God Who has helped you on many occasions is still with them. Several wars had been fought after migration until the conquest of Makkah. Except for a few, all these had been won by Muslims. The next part of the verse that relates to the battle of Hunayn is meant to dispel a doubt that may arise about the aforementioned promise of help. This war that took place in the near past, Muslims had initially been on the losing side. Hence it was essential that its true nature be brought to light: initially because of their large number, Muslims became arrogant and over-confident. The consequence of this was that they faced defeat and ran away from the battle-field. However, later God blessed His Messenger and sincere believers with courage and helped them with armies they could not see. As a result, the disbelievers were routed through their hands.

The implication is that God did give them victory in this battle too once He had admonished them. It is evident from historical reports that the Muslim army consisted of twelve thousand combatants. Before this, they had inflicted great defeats on the disbelievers on many occasions even when they were small in number and under-equipped in weapons. In Hunayn, they were in large number for the first time and this made them think that who could defeat them. This wrong self-confidence naturally produced carelessness in them. Many of the combatants became indifferent to God. Earlier in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Anfāl, they had already been warned of this slackness: إِذَا الْقِيَمَةُ فُتِّتْ فَاتَّبِعُوا أَوْذُكُمُ وَاللَّهُ كَثِيرٌ وَأَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (when you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed). Similarly, they paid little attention to order and discipline, obedience and sincerity towards which they were directed in verses 46-47 of that sūrah: وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ وَطَرُكُمْ فَذَلِكُمُ الرِّجْسُ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُرْجَسُونَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَأَرْسَاءَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَعَ أَسْلِحِهِمْ فَعَذَلُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (and obey God and His Messenger and do not quarrel with one another for as its consequence you will feel defeated and your resolve will weaken; remain steadfast because God is with those

13. Indeed, God has helped you at many instances. And on the day of Hunayn 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 narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away. Ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers and sent down such armies which you did not see and punished the disbelievers and precisely this is the punishment of the disbelievers. Then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

who are steadfast. Be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully). The consequence of this was that just as disobedience to the Prophet (sws) and mutual dispute in the battle of Uḥud had made them taste defeat, in a similar way, vanity in their large number threatened them with danger in the battle of Ḥunayn. Found in this vanity was a reflection of pomposity and show-off which God does not like and from which He has stopped people when they wage war. Such vanity makes a person repose his trust in means and resources instead of God. The fact is that it should be God that he must trust in all circumstances. If this trust weakens, then the largest of numbers and the greatest of resources become immaterial. People who are inflicted with this vanity that no one can defeat them find the earth becoming constricted for them in spite of its vastness: they find no place to escape.

The words “ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers” point to the fact that whatever happened, happened merely to admonish Muslims. After it, God blessed the believers with courage. The way this happened was that He sent down tranquillity to His Messenger and his sincere followers. Their tranquillity became a source of producing tranquillity in others. It is evident from historical reports recorded by chroniclers that when the Muslim army panicked, only the Prophet (sws) and a few of his sincere companions stood their ground bravely. It was his courage and valour that instilled others with a new spirit and they rallied around him and ended up victorious after defeat through God’s help. The disbelievers were meted out the punishment that had become destined for them through the hands of the believers. “Tranquillity” means “courage and determination.” The expression “and sent down such armies which you did not see” refers to the armies of angels which accompany the believers everywhere but cannot be observed.

The words “then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; and God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful” show that in spite of all these events, God will give those people the urge to repent who have even the slightest ability left in them. This was a type of glad tiding for people who were worried about their relatives among the disbelievers. This topic has also been discussed in verse 15 earlier. This glad tiding can be seen in very clear words in Sūrah al-Naṣr too.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّا أَنشَأْنَا لَكُمْ فَتْرًا ۖ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَٰذَا ۖ وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ
يُغْنِيكُمْ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِن شَاءَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝١٤

This is the last directive in the series regarding the declaration of acquittal. Impurity here obviously means the filth of their faith, details of which have been mentioned at

14. Believers! These Idolaters are absolutely impure. So, they must not even come near the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs and if you fear poverty, then if God wills, He shall soon make you rich through His grace. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and All-Wise.

other instances. After the conquest of Makkah, the Idolaters no longer controlled the House of God but until 9 AH they were given the concession to come and offer the *hajj* in accordance with their own method. They were also allowed to do trading and buy and sell merchandise. However, in the wake of the declaration of acquittal, it was announced at this very *hajj* that they could no longer come after that. This was a de fact preparation for the last *hajj* in 10 AH so that when the Prophet (sws) himself would offer it, the House would have been cleansed of all traces of disbelief.

The word عَيْكَة means “poverty.” Here it refers to financial and trade losses.

It is known that just as the *hajj* was a very grand ritual of worship, it also had great significance with regard to trade and business. In this season, merchandise from other cities would reach Makkah and that in Makkah was bought by the touring traders. Such was this significance with regard to trade in the times before the Qur’ān that the Quraysh had fixed the time of *hajj* in a particular season by inventing the principle of Nasī so that any change in season may not affect these trade journeys. Now when the Idolaters were stopped from visiting the House of God from the following year, people who belonged to trade and business became worried. They thought that this would very adversely affect their trade and business as a result of which the financial situation of the Muslims would continuously suffer. In order to pacify them, the verse sounds assurance. It is a fact that the promise mentioned in the verse was fulfilled in such a way that not for a single day did trading in Makkah suffer. Moreover, after some time, matters reached the extent that the treasures of Egypt, Syria and Rome travelled on camels to enter the public treasury of the Islamic state. God enriched the Muslims by His grace in such a way that people would not find recipients of their *zakāh* money in the streets of Madīnah.

The last part of the verse shows that this is nevertheless dependent on God’s will and God’s will is dependent on His knowledge and wisdom. Abundance of resources or their constriction is not in the hands of a person. It is in God’s control. Hence, God alone – every act of Whom is based on knowledge and wisdom – should be trusted.

It is evident from this verse that the real importance in Islam is that of spiritual values and faith. Political and economic needs come under it. Economic needs can be sacrificed for the values entailed by faith but not vice versa.

Section II: (29-35)

In the succeeding verses, believers are directed to wage war against the People of the Book, and just as they had been given a clear and definite policy about the Idolaters, they are now given a clear and definite policy against these People of the Book. These Jews and Christians can only live under the Islamic rule as *dhimmīs*. Details of their conspiracies and breach of promises have been stated in Sūrah al-Anfāl earlier. Here too certain aspects of their beliefs and character are pointed out. Evident from this is that

they are a worthless existence and will suffer punishment of their deeds.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزِّيَّابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَتَلْتَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهَبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَنَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لِيَآكُفُّونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُخَيَّضُ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in God or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger, nor follow the religion of truth until they pay the *jizyah* from their hands and are prepared to live a life of submission. (29)

And the Jews regard 'Uzayr to be the son of God and the Nazarenes say that the Messiah is the son of God. All these are but words of their own mouths. They are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them. The curse of God be on them. From where do they turn away? They have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too even though they had been asked to worship one God only. There is no god except Him. He is exalted above the partners they associate with Him. They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths and God has firmly has decided to complete His light, however much these disbelievers may dislike it. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so that he may make it sovereign over all religions, however much the Idolaters too may detest this. (30-33)

Believers! Most among these scholars and rabbis are those who devour the wealth of people through illegal means and stop [people] from the path of God. And give glad

tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God. On the day when this gold and silver of theirs shall be heated in the fire of Hell; then their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding. (34-35)

Explanation

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

The political and religious wrongdoings of the People of the Book have been mentioned in Sūrahs al-Baqarah, A%l-i ‘Imrān, al-Mā’idah and al-Anfāl. These people not only laid claim to faith but also regarded themselves to have sole monopoly of religion and *sharī’ah*. However, it is evident from these *sūrahs* that they did not believe in God, in the hereafter and in the *sharī’ah*. The basic condition of faith is that it must fulfil the requisites stipulated by God; yet, their faith was governed by their own desires and religious innovations. By inventing polytheistic beliefs, they had God negated God, regarded themselves to be the favourite and forgiven *ummah* and by allowing the things disallowed by God and His Messenger (sws) were guilty of revoking the *sharī’ah*. Moreover, they not only rejected the religion sent through His last prophet, as promised, they also went as far as to expend all their strength in opposing it. They continued to indulge in conspiracies against it. Believers were thence ordered to wage war against these miscreants since they did not deserve any lenience. This war should continue until they pay the *jizyah* and agree to live in submission under the Muslim rule.

Consider the expression: حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ. The word يَدٍ means “hand” but also refers to dominance. In other words, this payment of *jizyah* from them should be as a result of the dominance of the believers. This is a tax imposed on all mature and earning individuals in lieu of security granted to the life and wealth of the People of the Book and to their women and children. Its amount differs and is in accordance with the ability of the individual. There is also a lot of possibility of concession and exemption in it. Details can be looked up in the chapter “Rights of Non-Muslims” in my Book *The Islamic State*.

Here a very distinct thing that can be seen is the difference in treatment between the Idolaters and the People of the Book. About the former, the believers were ordered to execute them until they accepted faith but in the case of the latter, the believers were told to give them security if they agreed to pay the *jizyah*. The reason for this

15. Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in God or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger, nor follow the religion of truth until they pay the *jizyah* from their hands and are prepared to live a life of submission.

difference has already been indicated earlier: Muḥammad (sws) was born into the Idolaters and it was in their language that God's Book was revealed to him. He invited them as his addressees in his preaching and it was in accordance with their demands and what they regarded to be good (*ma'rūf*) and *munkar* (evil) that the truth was conclusively delivered by him to them. After all this elaborate arrangement, there was no possibility of any further respite for them. Thus the Idolaters could not be made Dhimmīs but this chance was given to other non-Muslims.

The directive mentioned in this verse primarily relates to the People of the Book. But in the time of the companions, it was decided that the same treatment would be given to other non-Muslims. Thus the Magians were regarded as similar to the People of the Book and made Dhimmīs. If there is any difference of opinion in this among the jurists, it is of secondary nature. Details of this can be looked up in books of jurisprudence.

It must be specially noted here that the directive relates to Dhimmīs who have been conquered. In other words, they are ones who waged war with an Islamic state and after being defeated were forced into compliance. They are a different category than what our jurists called Mu'āhids (contractual citizens) or Ahl al-Ṣulḥ (peace-treaty citizens). My afore-mentioned book deals with both these types of citizens. They are ones who out of their own will have desired to live under an Islamic state without any war being waged against them. They will be treated in accordance with the agreement concluded with them. So much so, if they insist that they too should be treated with the same terms and conditions in financial matters as Muslims are, then a government can use its discretion to do so. Breaking such an agreement with them without any logical reason is regarded as a grave offence.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزِّيُّ بْنُ ابْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ بْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهَوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
مِنْ قَبْلُ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهَبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا
أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا ۚ لَآ إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَنَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

'Uzayr is mentioned in the Torah as Ezra. It is said that he lived around 5 BC. In the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews had lost the Torah. It is said that it was Ezra who re-compiled the Torah from his memory. It may well be that it was because of this feat of his that the Jews of the Arabian peninsula revered him and this reverence increased to such an extent that they made him the son of God. This

16. And the Jews regard 'Uzayr to be the son of God and the Nazarenes say that the Messiah is the son of God. All these are but words of their own mouths. They are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them. The curse of God be on them. From where do they turn away? They have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too even though they had been asked to worship one God only. There is no god except Him. He is exalted above the partners they associate with Him.

would make the Torah compiled by him to have authenticity; and if anyone raised any doubt about it, it could be said that this was the same Torah as the one revealed to Moses (sws) and that after its disappearance it was recompiled by God through His son Ezra. It may be noted that in the idolatrous society of those times such an idea could have become very useful. I was not able to find any details in the literature of the Jews regarding this notion. However, it is apparent from the style of the Qur'ān that it was a very well known fact among the Jews. Had this not been the case, they would have definitely objected against this statement of the Qur'ān. Thus the Qur'ānic wordsm “they have made their scholars and rabbis to be their Lord” were contested by certain quarters and they rejected this claim. The Prophet (sws) gave them an answer that silenced them and it was then that they were satisfied. Similarly, if someone had raised any objection against the claim of the Qur'ān cited here, it would have been stated but no such objection has been cited anywhere.

The discussion on Jesus (sws) being regarded the son of God can be found in the exegesis of Sūrah A%l-‘Imrān.

In the earlier verses, it was mentioned that the Jews and Christians do not believe in God and in the hereafter. Now the arguments in favour of this are cited. Both ascribed a son to God. The basic condition of belief in God is that none should have a share in his being, attributes and rights.

The words “all these are but words of their own mouths” imply that ascribing a son to God is a fabrication.

The words “they are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them” imply that these people are blindly following the words of their predecessors. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah A%l-i ‘Imrān that in their religious innovations, the Jews and Christians copied the beliefs of their contemporary idolaters but tried to coat them with their own ambiguous words and phrases. For example, in order to popularize Christianity among the Romans and the Greeks, they used content from their beliefs and polytheistic concepts and with the help of words like *ab* (أب) and *ibn* (ابن) used in the Gospels for God and Jesus (sws) respectively authored a whole mythology. The first of these words is used for “father” and “Lord” and the second of them for “son” and “servant.” The context clearly shows which of the meanings is implied. But when Hebrew became an extinct language and only translations of the Gospels were extant in the hands of the Christians, only those meanings of these words became the real ones in which they existed in a translation. For example, the Christians of Arabia began taking *ab* (أب) and *ibn* (ابن) to mean “father” and “son” respectively because in Arabic these are the conventional meanings of these words. A similar situation arose at other instances too: the real source of beliefs was not the Book of God; rather the language of its translations.

The Qur'ān has pointed to this very deviance: these people have blindly followed the mythology fabricated by their predecessors and in spite of being reminded of the

actual reality did not pay heed.

In Arabic, the expression **قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ** signifies a curse and **أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ** connotes regret and sorrow.

In verse 29, it was stated: “nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger.” Now in “they have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too” this claim is substantiated.

The word **أَحْبَار** is the plural of **حَبِر** and it is primarily used for Jewish scholars and **رُهَبَان** is the plural of **رَاهِب** and it is generally used for Christian saints and mystics. Making them their Lord is evident from a famous narrative of ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim (rta). He asked the Prophet (sws) that the Jews and Christians do not regard their scholars and saints to be their Lord. At this, the Prophet (sws) remarked that do they not regard what they allow to be allowed and what they disallow to be disallowed. ‘Adī answered in the affirmative. At this, the Prophet (sws) said this precisely is making them their Lord and worshipping them.¹⁷

In the same context, Jesus son of Mary is also mentioned but he is mentioned separately to distinguish him so that all those alleged things could be pointed to which the Christians had invented regarding Jesus (sws): he was made their Lord; but furthermore, he was regarded to be the son of God; in fact, God per se.

The words “even though they had been asked to worship one God only” imply that they adopted polytheism in spite of the fact that it they had been expressly forbidden from it in the Torah and Gospel. I have cited the necessary information in this regard in the exegesis of A%l-i ‘Imrān.¹⁸

The word **سُبْحَنَهُ** absolves negative attributes in the noun it qualifies. Found in this word is also a very clear logical argument in favour of monotheism: it is obviously totally illogical to associate an entirely opposite attribute to someone’s established and fundamental attributes. According to this principle, associating any partner to God is against His attribute of divinity because it necessitates a refutation of His universally acknowledged attributes.

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَن يَبْلُغَ نَوْرَهُ وَكَوْكَرُهُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Earlier in verses 29-30, it has been mentioned that God sent His true religion to

17. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 349.

18. *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 113.

19. They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths and God has firmly decided to complete His light, however much these disbelievers may dislike it. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so that he may make it sovereign over all religions, however much the Idolaters too may detest this.

guide them but they were not prepared to follow it and would make false excuses to oppose it. They neither have any proof from God for them nor any evidence in their favour that can be drawn from human nature and intellect. In the verses under discussion, this fact is now being made evident in the form of a parable: opposing God's religion through baseless pretexts is like blowing the sun – as if it were a fire ignited in a lamp – through the blows of their mouths. Verse 33 also occurs in Sūrah al-Şaff. I will explain some of its aspects there. It may also be noted that the content of this verse has also been explained under verse 192 of Sūrah verse 39 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. I have explained at these instances that the greatest objective of Prophet Muḥammad's advent was to cleanse the land of the Sacred Mosque from every trace of polytheism and disbelief and no other religion except the true religion should remain dominant in this land. As a consequence, this centre of Abraham's basic message – as a result of his supplication – becomes a fountainhead of guidance and light for the whole world. In these verses too it is said that just as the People of the Book will not be able to extinguish the lamp of God with the blows of their mouths, in a similar way, these Idolaters will not be able to triumph over the religion of truth. In fact, in spite of all their efforts, it will remain dominant on every religion of this land.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ
الَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ يَوْمَ يُخَالِىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ
جَهَنَّمَ فُتُكُلَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَأُخْفُورُهُمْ ۖ هَٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ لَكُمْ نَفْسُكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾²⁰

Earlier, those wrongdoings the People of the Book were guilty of with regard to God were mentioned. Now those wrongdoing are being stated which they committed against their fellow human beings so that it becomes fully clear that their existence has no benefit now and they are merely a burden on the face of God's earth. They deserve that their wretched presence be done away with. Here a special aspect must also be kept in mind that instead of the character of the masses, the character of their scholars and sages has been exposed. The purpose is to show that if their scholars have such a character, then what to speak of their masses and how can they be reformed. Only the scholars and sages could have reformed them. When they have

20. Believers! Most among these scholars and rabbis are those who devour the wealth of people through illegal means and stop [people] from the path of God. And give glad tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God. On the day when this gold and silver of theirs shall be heated in the fire of Hell; then their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding.

become so greedy and slaves to their wealth, who will reform the masses.

Amongst the Jews, all the positions related to religious and temporal judicial forums were held by their scholars. As for the priests of the Christians, they even had the authority to grant documents of salvation to the people. Moreover, they had regarded their own selves to be the recipients of charity disbursed by the masses. For this reason, gathering and hoarding wealth through illegal means were open for them in abundance. They had even taken to interest-based lending. It is also indicated in the Qur’ān that they used to relish obtaining money from non-Israelites through wrong means. Jesus (sws) condemned them in very harsh words on their greediness. Seeing the ill-ways of the administration of the temple, he is reported to have remarked that they had made the House of his father a “a den of robbers” (Matthew, 21:13). He also said: “You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matthew, 23:23).

The words “stop [people] from the path of God” refer to the fact that these scholars had adopted the very opposite way in discharging their duties: the obligation God had imposed on them was to show the way of God to people. On the contrary, they were using all their abilities to stop people from this way and instead of become guides for people, they had become robbers in the words of Jesus (sws). These ill-ways of the scholars of Jews in stopping people from the path of God have been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Though the words “and give glad tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God” address those who were greedy and had become slaves to their wealth, which have been mentioned earlier, but their style is general and relates to all those who hoard wealth. The clear purpose of this teaching is that wealth is not meant for accumulation; it is meant for spending in the way of God, which means spending it in all those heads which are mentioned in the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth and which can be directly or indirectly subsumed under them. It must be noted that it is not said that those who do not pay *zakāh* in spite of being eligible to pay it; what is on the contrary said is that those who hoard wealth and do not spend it in the way of God will face the warning mentioned. Spending in the way of God (*infāq fī sabīllillāh*) is different from giving *zakāh*. God demands two things from every person who has wealth: the first is to pay *zakāh* and the second is to spend in the way of God instead of accumulating it. The first of these demands is legal and an Islamic government, if needed, can even forcibly collect *zakāh* from each of its citizens. The second of these is *infāq fī sabīllillāh*; however, it cannot be forcibly exacted. It has been left to the person who can afford such spending. It is this voluntary spending on which depends the real status of a person before God. As has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is this spending which strengthens a person’s faith and it is this spending which blesses a person with the treasure of wisdom. It also enhances the radiance of the heart. If a person has heaps of

wealth and he is indifferent to the needs of the orphans among his neighbours, the poor and the indigent and also does not care about the requirements of religion, its education and war for the cause of God, he cannot absolve himself from accountability before God even if he pays *zakāh*, which is what is legally due from him. Further ahead in this *sūrah*, the Hypocrites are mentioned who would regard spending on others to be a penalty. The Qur’ān has called this worship of wealth to be a proof of their hypocrisy and very sternly warned them. Obviously, this warning was not sounded to them for not paying *zakāh*; they would nevertheless pay it with reluctance otherwise they would have been sought and killed. Their real crime was that they would refrain from spending for *jihād* in spite of being affluent and this attitude is from among the signs of hypocrisy per se; in fact, in some circumstances, it becomes a very filthy sort of hypocrisy which cannot exist with faith. Some people present the example of the affluence of the companions and say that accumulating wealth is fine if a person pays *zakāh*. However, this opinion is not true. Companions who were affluent were so because the nature of their wealth was business and trade related. To invest money in trade to increase it cannot be called hoarding. It is called earning wealth and this not something condemned in Islam. It is something very praiseworthy. If a person invests in permissible trade ventures, earns money through permissible means and while abstaining from stinginess and overspending spends on his needs, pays the *zakāh* due on him and voluntarily spends his wealth openly and secretly, then he is rendering true service to an Islamic society and will be someone whose deeds will be accepted by God in the hereafter. Among the companions, ‘Uthmān (rta) was one such affluent person and other companions too were of similar sort. Who can deny the benefits reaped by Muslims through the wealth of ‘Uthmān? Then how can it be thought that in the last years of his life this generous person who was blessed with wealth would have taken to accumulating wealth against his general practice and habit?

However, it must be clearly remembered that this spending in the way of God cannot be enforced on a person as *zakāh*. It is to be done voluntarily by a person of wealth. It is among the duties of a government that it does not allow the ailment of hoarding wealth spread in the society. It should use all its means to urge and exhort people to spend in the way of God. The most effective way to achieve this is that the ruling class of the society should keep their standard of living in check. They should be adhere to moderation and urge others too to adopt it. In fact, they should strongly discourage trends that induce people to outdo one another in raising these standards.

Consider now the last part of the verse “their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding.” The race to hoard wealth is based on two factors: first is to be more prominent among one’s contemporaries and second is to lead a luxurious life.

Section III: (36-37)

In the previous verses, the believers were directed to wage war against the Idolaters and the People of the Book. Now in the succeeding two verses, it is being directed that the sanctity of the four sacred months should be maintained. It is in fact a further emphasis of the directive mentioned in verse 5 which says that only when the sacred months are over should war be waged. After that, the innovation of *nasīy* is also reformed which the Idolaters of Arabia had derived from the People of the Book. It has already been mentioned earlier that the Idolaters of Arabia had made their calendar on the basis of the principle of *kabīṣah* keeping in view their trade benefits. This had resulted in the sacred months falling in the same season each year. This innovation had displaced the lunar months from their actual place. Since lunar months were the ones that were ordained by God and since the time of Abraham (sws), it was they who had been in prescribed for offering *hajj* and *‘umrah*, it became essential that this innovation be reformed once the revival of the religion of Abraham (sws) was entering its last phase. This would restore the sacred months and the rituals of *hajj* to their original place. Thus the last *hajj* of the Prophet (sws) was offered exactly on the date which was the correct one with regard to the lunar calendar.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ
الَّذِينَ الْقِيَمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ
الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوْطِئُوا عِدَّةَ
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ زَيْنٌ لَهُمْ سُوْءٌ أَعْمَالِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Indeed in God's record, God has ordained the months twelve in number from the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true way. Therefore, do not be unjust to your selves. And fight while being united against the Idolaters the way they fight against you while being united. And bear in mind that God is with those who fear Him. This *nasīy* is an addition to disbelief through which the disbelievers are led into error. In some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed. Their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers. (36-37)

Explanation

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَغْلِبُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

First, as a prelude, the importance of lunar months is explained: they are the ones ordained by God for this universe because He has made a system to determine them from within the universe. Such is this system that it affords a very accessible way for even the least learned to determine it. Thus in verse 5 of Sūrah Yūnus, it is stated: “it is He who made the sun radiant and the moon a light and ordained phases for it so that you are able to find the number of years and their calculation from it.” This is the divine calendar ordained by God and has been in force since the start of creation. This is a reference to the fact that there is no such evidence from the system of the universe that can be cited for man made calendars. This divine calendar becomes evident every month on the horizon and keeps a count of days, months and years by the waxing and waning of the moon. Never does any error creep into it.

“God’s record” refers to the book in which the directives and laws regarding this universe are written. Since these twelve months from which four are sacred are also recorded in this book, any effort to the change them would amount to disrupting the calendar ordained by God, which would be totally against His will.

The words “this is the true way” point to the fact that this calendar is the right way. Just as Islam is the true way because the signs found in this world bear witness to it, in a similar way, this calendar too is the real calendar because it is ratified by a sign found in the world: the moon. It may be kept in mind that just as agriculture is dependent on time and climate, religious issues also are dependent on time, days and years. Just as any cultivation done in the wrong season will produce no results, similarly, the prayer, the fast and the *hajj* offered at the wrong time will be fruitless. For this reason, it became essential that the calendar on which worship rituals are dependent should also be given religious status. Thus, it is called “the true way” because it is also part of the religion and an important one too. Effecting any change in it is tantamount to effecting interpolation in religion.²¹

The words “therefore, do not be unjust to your selves” imply that the believers should not violate the sanctity of these months nor change them. If they initiate war in

21. Indeed in God’s record, God has ordained the months twelve in number from the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true way. Therefore, do not be unjust to your selves. And fight while being united against the Idolaters the way they fight against you while being united. And bear in mind that God is with those who fear Him.

22. The question whether Muslims can use any other calendar than the lunar one is beyond the scope of our discussion. My submission is that in religious matters, only the lunar calendar must be followed and cannot be changed in any way.

these months, they would not be harming God in any way; they will only be unjust to their own selves. This is because if God regarded them to be sacred, it was for their benefit. Thus if they change them, they will only harm their own selves since they will deprive themselves of the blessings God has placed within them.

Fighting them while being united refers to the fact that any sympathy, familial or tribal relationship with the disbelievers or any political or economic benefit should not be a cause of any discrimination in waging war with some. Regardless of all such ties and benefits, all Idolaters should be fought with without any exception. This is because they too have adopted the same scheme against the believers. They are the collective enemies of the believers. In verse ten, it was stated: “they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise.” Thus the believers should wage war in a united way and kill the disbelievers wherever they find them; however, they must give due regard to the sacred months. They must not initiate war in these months; but if attacked they can wage a defensive war, as has been stated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Believers must keep in mind that God is only with those who abide by the limits prescribed by Him. It must be kept in mind that in the Arabia also, families would have strong ties with each other on the basis of treaties and being political allies. The resultant obligations were given great importance.

After the general declaration of acquittal stated at the beginning of the *sūrah*, here the believers are directed that any such connection with Idolaters must not hamper them in waging war. They should declare war against all the Idolaters without any exception.

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُصَلِّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِّيُطَاوِلُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۚ رَبِّينَ لَهُمْ سَوَاءُ أَعْبَاهِهِمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

The word نساء means “to defer something” or “to push it back.” From it, is the expression نساء البعير دفعه عن الحوض which means that the camel was pushed back from reaching the fountain. نساء الرعي في ظم الأبل means “the shepherd pushed backed the camels from drinking water for some days.” From this participle, the noun نسيء was made. In the parlance of Arab *jāhiliyyah*, it refers to that month which is deferred by adding a few days to it. The solar calendar has approximately eleven days more than the lunar one. In order to compensate this reduction in the lunar calendar, the Arabs would add days commensurate to this reduction. The practical way adopted for this was that after every eight years, three months were added. Thus at the end of every second or third

23. This *nasīy* is an addition to disbelief through which the disbelievers are led into error. In some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed. Their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers.

year, one month would be that of *kabīṣah*. In this way, according to their thinking, they would keep intact the sanctity of the lunar month, in particular the sacred months and also at the same time transformed it in to a solar month to suit their trade benefits.

As pointed out, the Arabs did this to keep intact the count of the sacred months, which was a religious requirement and in this way their trade expediencies were also taken care of. However, the Qur’ān did not accept this religiosity of theirs and called it an addition in disbelief. This led to their further diversion from the straight path and from the way of Abraham (sws).

The words “in some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed” point to the reason why Nasīy has been regarded as an addition in disbelief. It should be kept in mind that this change of the lunar calendar into the solar one would result in the *hajj* and the sacred months being displaced from their original time by thirty three years. God made the last *hajj* of the Prophet (sws) happen on exactly the same time as it should originally have happened before the tampering with the lunar calendar. Thus the Prophet (sws) proclaimed: **قَدْ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ** (time after its passage has returned to its original position – the one it had when God had created the heavens and the earth).²⁴ So at that very day, he declared that the lunar calendar ordained by God shall be imposed and the Nasīy principle stood revoked. This was in exact compliance to verse 36 above.

The words “their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers” imply that by joining belief and disbelief through completing the count of the sacred months, this show put up by them is not religiosity at all. Such religiosity will be fruitless on the Day of Judgement.

Section IV: (38-42)

After declaring war with the Idolaters and the People of the Book in the previous sections, the discourse now shifts towards the Hypocrites and continues until the very end of the *sūrah*. It is as if after open enemies of the Muslims, their hidden ones are addressed. Every one of their weaknesses as well as their pranks is exposed in detail so that believers fully become aware of them and are not deceived. Prior to this, whatever criticism was done on the Hypocrites was couched in soft words. However, in this *sūrah* just as the final verdict was declared against the Idolaters and the People of the Book, in a similar way, an unchallengeable verdict was pronounced against the Hypocrites. The purpose was that those among them who have any potential of repenting and reforming themselves are provided with this opportunity and they

24. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1168, (no. 3025).

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَتَقْلَتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ ۖ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۖ
وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ
إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ۖ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سُلُوفًا وَالنَّهَارَ نَطًّا ۚ وَلَهُ الْغُلْيَا ۗ
وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ انْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَكِنْ بَعْدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ۗ
وَسَيُخْلِفُونِ بِاللَّهِ لَوْ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ ۖ يُهْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Go out with light provisions and with heavy ones too, and wage *jihād* for the cause of God with your persons and wealth. This is better for you if you know. Had the gain been immediate and the journey easy, these people would have definitely followed you; but this destination became difficult for them. And now they will swear oaths by God: "If we could have gone out, we definitely would have gone out with you." They are destroying themselves and God knows that they are absolute liars. (41-42)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ ائْزِفُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَتَأْقِلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

The word *نائف* means to go out for war or for some other similar purpose. The words *تأقّل* and *تأقّل* are the same. They mean “to feel the burden of the something.” The addition of *إِلَى الْأَرْضِ* (to the ground) picturizes the whole scene. Instead of getting up as commanded, they fall to the ground like a heavy load.

Though the words of the verse are general, yet they are directed to the hypocrites who were evading *jihād* because of laziness and vested interests.

The words “are you content with the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter? in contrast to the Hereafter, the life of this world is very meagre?” depict the real reason in the form of a question. They want immediate gains of this world and ignore the world to come.

إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

This verse sounds a threat to the hypocrites for not being prepared to go out for war. In verse 38 of Sūrah Muḥammad, it is similarly stated: وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ²⁷.

The sentence “and God has power over everything” simultaneously points to several facts: firstly, God has the power to punish them; secondly, God has the power to replace them with others; thirdly, God has the power to accomplish all His schemes and is not dependent on anyone in this regard.

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

25. Believers! What is the matter with you that when it is said to you: “Go out to wage *jihād* for the cause of God,” you fall flat to the ground? Are you content with the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter? In contrast to the Hereafter, the life of this world is very meagre.

26. If you do not get up, then God will give you a painful punishment and bring some other nation in your place and you will not be able to harm Him the least. And God has power over everything.

27. And if you turn away, He will replace you by others; then they shall not be like yourselves.

28. If you do not help the Prophet, it does not matter. God helped him at the time when the disbelievers turned him out such that he was only the second of the two when both of them were in the cave when he was telling his companion: “Grieve not; God is with us.” So, God sent down His tranquillity on him and helped him with armies you could not see and He brought down the word of the disbelievers and only the word of God prevailed. And God is Powerful; He is very Wise.

Concomitant indications found ahead show that the antecedent of the accusative pronoun in تَنْصُرُوهُ is the Prophet (sws). This is because it was he who had invited people to wage war as God's envoy. The hypocrites were addressed in the previous verse while being indifferent to them. The reasons for this indifference are explained in this verse: the objective of making God's name prevail is the sole one for which God's Messenger has taken a step; if they do not support him, they should not think that this task would not be achieved. The God Who has helped His Messenger at every step during his migration is still there to help him.

The disbelievers had turned out the Prophet (sws) from Makkah and just one companion (Abū Bakr (rta)) could accompany him in his journey of migration. All the Quraysh was thirsty for his blood but he fooled them to come out of Makkah and none could harm him. Both of them had sought refuge in a cave and the enemies in their pursuit reached the opening of the cave. Abū Bakr (rta) feared that they would be soon caught by them and this would be their end. In this situation, the Prophet (sws) assured him as the verse says and God also sent down His tranquillity on them. They are then reminded of God's invisible forces that helped them in other battles. They notched up victory after victory and the God's religion prevailed. If He helped them in the past through such majestic means, how can He be dependent on the help of the hypocrites now? He is Mighty and Powerful. Thus none can stop Him in what He wants to do and every act of His has such wisdom that none can attain it.

29 ﴿إِنْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

The word خِفَاف is the plural of خفيف and ثِقَال is the plural of ثَقِيل. Here خفيف is used for a person who because of straitened circumstances does not have provisions and ammunition for war. ثَقِيل on the other hand, refers to someone who has all the provisions and ammunition for war.

What is implied is that any scarcity in weaponry should not be an excuse to not go out for war. Whatever is available should be availed for this purpose and they should be prepared to fight with their persons and their wealth. The blessings this would entail would be limitless and if they desist from going out, then the loss incurred would also be limitless too.

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَكِنْ بَعَدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ۖ وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا

29. Go out with light provisions and with heavy ones too, and wage *jihād* for the cause of God with your persons and wealth. This is better for you if you know.

مَعَكُمْ يَهْدِيكُمُ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ أَسَفَاءٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَذِٰبُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The word **سَفَاةٌ** refers to the distance a traveller covers. The words “but this destination became difficult for them” show that the hypocrites are being warned on the weaknesses they showed in the battle of Tabūk. In this battle, the distance that had to be covered was of a fair amount and the hot weather was also unfavourable. It took place in 9 AH when the crops were ready for harvest. Moreover, the enemy was in large numbers. Hence, the weaknesses of the hypocrites were totally exposed. They fabricated lame and false excuses including a lack of adequate resources to wage war. Though the Prophet (sws) was fully aware of the nature of their excuses, he ignored them out of magnanimity. But God had different plans: He exposed them so that those who could mend their affairs could do so; otherwise, Muslims at least would be able to recognize their machinations. If they knew that they could gain spoils of war without much effort in travel, they would have definitely gone out with the Muslims. However, they were not prepared to face the pangs of the hard journey ahead. Instead of confessing their weakness, they readily swore oaths to convince Muslims that it was not cowardice that was stopping them but their lack of provisions. The words “they are destroying themselves” imply that through their false excuses, they think that they are saving themselves; the fact is that they are destroying themselves. This is because evading *jihād* when a Muslim ruler makes a general appeal to participate in it entails severe punishment. I have explained under verse 195 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that running away from the obligations of God is running towards destruction.

Section V: (42-60)

In the succeeding verses, first the Prophet (sws) is very affectionately chided on his graciousness for accepting the lame excuses fabricated by the hypocrites. Thereafter a yardstick of discriminating sincere believers from the hypocrites is placed before him: true and strong believers will never present excuses of not waging *jihād* before him. Only they present such excuses who have hypocrisy hidden in their hearts and because of this hypocrisy God has deprived them of this blessed obligation.

After this, assurance is sounded to the believers that if the hypocrites did not go out for *jihād*, it was in their favour because in that case they would have spread mischief among the believers. Such instances happened in the past too. Though they are

30. Had the gain been immediate and the journey easy, these people would have definitely followed you; but this destination became difficult for them. And now they will swear oaths by God: “If we could have gone out, we definitely would have gone out with you.” They are destroying themselves and God knows that they are absolute liars.

apparently with the believers, they are working as agents of someone else.

After that some other hypocrites are referred to who had also put up a show of religiosity in fabricating their excuses. They contended that they were not participating in *jihād* to protect their religion and morals. They are reprimanded on their false religiosity and the malice they have for Islam and Muslims is fully exposed.

Next, the hypocrites are warned that none of their spending for the cause of God is acceptable to Him because they are devoid of faith. They spend for His cause under compulsion and their prayer is just a display of show off. At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is directed to not give them any importance. Their wealth will not be of any use for religion. It will become a source of destruction for them both in this world and in the next.

The verses then say that if these hypocrites are still clinging to Muslims it is either because of fear or greed. Since they have no escape route, they have sought refuge in the folds of Islam. Such is the extent of their greed that they blame the Prophet (sws) for not giving them in full from the heads of charity. At the same time, the heads of charity are also explained so that no one should enter the folds of Islam merely because of this greed.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Explanation

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ ۚ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَ تَعْلَمَ الْكَذِبِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَا عُدَّةَ لَهُ عَدَّةٌ وَلَكِنْ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ انْبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْفَاجِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَا أُضْعِفُوا خَلْلَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمْ الْفِتْنَةَ ۚ وَفِيكُمْ سَعُيُونَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ لَقَدْ ابْتَغُوا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّى جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَ هُمْ كَرَاهُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ ائْذَنْ لِي وَلَا تَفْتِنِي ۚ أَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا ۚ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَبُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِنْ تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرًا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ يَتَوَلَّوْا وَ هُمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى الْحُسَيْنَيْنِ ۖ وَ نَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ عُنْدِهِ أَوْ بِأَيْدِينَا ۚ فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُتَرَبِّصُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قُلْ أَنْفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَّلَ

مِنْكُمْ ۖ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَ
 بِرُسُلِهِ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَىٰ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا
 أَوْلَادُهُمْ ۖ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَرْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَيَخْلِفُونَ
 بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ ۖ وَمَا هُمْ بِمِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلَجًا أَوْ مَغْرَبًا أَوْ مَدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا
 إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَلْبِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ ۚ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْطُوا مِنْهَا إِذَا
 هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَ
 رَسُولُهُ ۖ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَبْدِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا الْبُؤْلَفَةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ
 فِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِيِّنَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۖ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also. Those who truly believe in God and the Hereafter shall never come to you to seek exemption that they be excused to wage *jihad* with their persons and wealth. God is fully aware of His pious servants. Only those come to seek exemption who do not believe in God and the Hereafter and whose hearts are afflicted with doubts and their doubts have made them reluctant. And if they had wanted to go out, they could have made some preparation but God did not like their getting up; so made them sit and said: “Keep sitting with those who sit.” (43-46)

If these people had joined you in your march, they would have only caused turmoil in you and all their efforts among you are to incite mischief. And there are those among you who do listen to them and God is fully aware of these unjust people. They have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents until against their will the truth appeared and God’s directive manifested itself. (47-48)

And there are those among them also who say: “Grant me exemption and do not put me through a trial.” – Listen up! They are already in a trial. And indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers. And if some success befalls you, they are grieved, and if some calamity befalls you, they say: “Good that this happened. We had already secured ourselves,” and they return joyous. Tell them: Only that shall befall us what God has ordained for us. He is our guardian and for the believers, it is only befitting that He alone should be trusted. Tell them: You await for us nothing except one out of two good things. But what we await for you is that either God will send His torment to you from Himself or through our hands. So wait, we also are among those who wait with you. (49-52)

Tell them: Whether you spend willingly or unwillingly, none of your spending will be accepted. You are a people who break promises. If their spending is not worth accepting, then the only reason is that they have shown disbelief in God and His Messenger. And if they come for prayer, it is because of compulsion and if they spend, they spend willingly. So, do not give any importance to their wealth and children. God only desires to punish them in the life of this world through them, and they lose their lives in the state of disbelief. (53-55)

And they repeatedly swear oaths by God to assure you that they are from among you even though they are not from among you. They are in fact cowards. Had they found an abode, a cave or a place to sit in, they would have broken their string and run frantically towards it. And among them are those also who censure you in the distribution of charity. If they receive from it, they remain happy and if they do not, they become furious. And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: “God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God.” Charity is only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are in charge of its set-up, and for those whose hearts are to be assured. Moreover, for the release of necks and to help those who have been inflicted with losses and for the way of God and for the welfare of the wayfarers. This is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise. (56-60)

Explanation

31 عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَبَيِّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَذِبِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

To ignore and forgive is an essential consequence of magnanimity. Just as the Prophet (sws) was an embodiment of all lofty human traits, he was also extremely magnanimous. The hypocrites would try to take undue advantage of this. They would make false excuses to evade religious obligations in particular, *jihād*. The Prophet (sws) was fully aware of the nature of these excuses but would ignore them and accept their excuses because of his magnanimous nature, as has just been pointed out. By taking advantage of this, the hypocrites would get another opportunity to hide their hypocrisy and this would continue to strengthen their power of deception. For this reason, the Almighty affectionately admonished the Prophet (sws). This admonishment begins with the words: “may God forgive you” to clarify that the purpose was not to actually scold him but to direct his attention to the wrong advantage the hypocrites would take of his gracious behaviour. He is told that in spite of knowing that their excuses are baseless, he gives them exemption; this makes them cling to their mischief even more strongly and succeed in their wickedness; had he not

31. May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also.

accepted their excuses, they would have been exposed and the good and the bad elements among them would have been exposed; thus those who would have chosen to stay back in their houses would have been identified as hypocrites; but now they hide behind the Prophet's redemption.

لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

These verses specify a prominent distinction between the hypocrites and the sincere believers who truly and strongly believe in God and the hereafter. God knows fully well His pious servants. Only those come to the Prophet (sws) to claim exemption who do not truly believe in God and in the hereafter and are afflicted with the ailment of doubt. As a result of this, they outwardly say that they are with God and His Prophet (sws) but their hearts are full of hesitancy. It may be kept in mind that those under discussion here the ones who would regard themselves to be excused because of false excuses but were not able to convince others of their excuses. This is because things that can become an excuse from *jihad* are not ones that can remain hidden. The excuse of people who are really handicapped in this regard is very evident and obvious. Every one regards it to be so. Thus details of the actual handicapped are provided ahead in this very *sūrah*:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾ إِذَا مَا اتَّوَكَّلْتَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أُحْمِلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَتَوَلَّوْا وَاعْيُوبُهُمْ تَفِيضٌ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ (٩ : ٩١-٩٢)

There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: "I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance," they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. (9:91-92)

32. Those who truly believe in God and the Hereafter shall never come to you to seek exemption that they be excused to wage *jihad* with their persons and wealth. God is fully aware of His pious servants. Only those come to seek exemption who do not believe in God and the Hereafter and whose hearts are afflicted with doubts and their doubts have made them reluctant.

I am inclined to think that the words “God is fully aware of His pious servants” actually point to such sincere handicapped believers.

وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً وَلَكِنْ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ انْبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْفَاعِلِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

The verse implies that all their excuses are baseless. It is not that they are lacking in resources; rather they are lacking in the will. Had they wanted they could have gathered some provisions.

It is the established practice of God that those who do not have an intention to do pious deeds, the urge to do them is taken away from them. If they have chosen to sit behind like children, women and the aged, they were deprived of the will and courage by God to undertake this venture.

The word تشبیط means “to stop and turn away a person from doing some task.” The words “so He made them sit” describe God’s established practice about providing the urge to do righteous deeds. The sentence is imbued with sarcasm: if you do not have the courage to go out, go and sit with those who sit in the houses.

In some of the succeeding verses, this sarcasm has become even more poignant.

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَا أُضْعِفُوا خِلَلَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ ۖ وَفِيكُمْ سَعُونَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾
لَقَدْ ابْتَغُوا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّى جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَرِهُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

The word خبال means “disorder” and “evil” and ايضاع means “to run around making efforts.”

The first sentence implies that if these people did not go out for war, then it was for the expediency of the believers.

The words “and there are those among you who do listen to them” refer to the simpletons among the believers. They were not hypocrites; yet because of their naivety would be deceived by the hypocrites. The purpose is to inform the believers in general about a section in them who are very easily influenced by conspiracies.

The expression سَعُونَ لَهُمْ has been discussed under the explanation of verse 41 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

The words “and God is fully aware of these unjust people” sound a threat. Since

33. And if they had wanted to go out, they could have made some preparation but God did not like their getting up; so made them sit and said: “Keep sitting with those who sit.”

34. If these people had joined you in your march, they would have only caused turmoil in you and all their efforts among you are to incite mischief. And there are those among you who do listen to them and God is fully aware of these unjust people. They have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents until against their will the truth appeared and God’s directive manifested itself.

God is fully aware of the unjust, one day they will meet their fate.

The words “they have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents” refer to some of the previous pranks perpetrated by the hypocrites to harm the believers and to spread disorder among them. They would try to change a matter or an incident by spreading mischief. The Qur’ān has not provided details because the believers already knew what was being insinuated. It was these people who, as has been pointed out in the explanation of the previous *sūrah*, tried to lead the believers to attack the trade caravan in the battle of Badr even though the intention of God and His messenger was clear to them. It was these people who initially advised the Prophet (sws) to counter the attack of the enemy in the battle of Uhud while being stationed in the city; later when their advice was not accepted, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy distanced himself from the believers right at the time of the battle. Then after the battle, he and his cronies spread the malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) that he was, God forbid, an ill-wisher of his people. In this regard, they contended that he was responsible for their killing when he took them to a wrong spot against the advice of the well-wishers and this resulted in their defeat.

It was these people who in the battle of Marṣī‘ were responsible to stir a fight between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, which was however averted. Another very heinous example of their pranks was the incident of *ifk*, which arose through distorted exaggeration of events. After the battle of Ḥunayn because of their wretchedness, they were able to cultivate enmity and malice in the hearts. In short, they tried to create rifts among the believers in every opportunity they got. However, in spite of these subversive activities, God protected the believers from their mischief.

35. وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ اِنَّكَ لَبِىْ وَلَا تَفْتِنْنِىْ ۚ اَلَا فِى الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوْا ۚ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَحِيْطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

This is a reference to some hypocrites who tried to present a pious type of excuse for not participating in the battle of Tabūk. They contended that since they were very attracted to women, they should be excused from this battle lest their beauty makes them fall into a trial. Though this excuse must have been presented by a few foolish elements, it was an excuse that was coated with religiosity and piety. For this reason, the Qur’ān specially mentioned it so that the believers were informed of this ploy of Satan: at times, he misleads them in the garb of piety. This excuse is similar to the one some claimants to piety present when they tell their devotees that they do not attend congregational prayers to protect themselves from show-off.

The words “they are already in a trial” are very subtle. In other words, their bitter trial has started in their own houses because they have concocted such an excuse – to

35. And there are those among them also who say: “Grant me exemption and do not put me through a trial.” – Listen up! They are already in a trial. And indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers.

escape from a religious obligation – which in itself is such a trial that no other trial is needed after this. Their own trial is severer and destructive than their anticipated trial of the Roman beauties.

One of the things evident from the words “and indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers” is that all such excuse-givers are disbelievers. The second thing evident from them is that howermuch excuses to escape from God they may concoct, the fact is that Hell has surrounded them from all sides; they cannot run away from it.

إِنْ تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

This verse exposes the inward self of the hypocrites. Excuses fashioned by them are just a deception. The real thing is their malice for the believers.

Some people have interpreted the words قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا as قَدْ أَخَذْنَا حُدْرَنَا, which is correct in my opinion.

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا ۖ هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى

الْحُسْنَيْنِ ۖ وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ يَأْتِيَنَا ۚ فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُتَرَبِّصُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

This is a response to the previous verse in which it is stated that the hypocrites would feel happy if some calamity would befall the believers. They are told that if any such a thing happens, it is their belief that it will happen not because they want it; rather it is because God wants it and there is definitely some good hidden in it. For the believers, hardship and ease, sorrow and joy, death and life – all have some expediency. One grants a believer the opportunity to learn patience, mend his wrong doings and the chance to repent. The second urges him to be grateful, fulfil the rights of others and be good to them. When a believer fights for the cause of God, he is a *ghāzī* and if he dies, he is a martyr.

However, the matter of the hypocrites is different. The consequence of the attitude they have adopted can result in two outcomes: either God will punish them directly or through the hands of the believers. None of these outcomes is good for them.

It may be kept in mind that once the truth has been conclusively communicated, waiting is not an expression of weakness; this wait is for the outcome to manifest

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

37. Tell them: Only that shall befall us what God has ordained for us. He is our guardian and for the believers, it is only befitting that He alone should be trusted. Tell them: You await for us nothing except one out of two good things. But what we await for you is that either God will send His torment to you from Himself or through our hands. So wait, we also are among those who wait with you.

itself. I will, God willing, write on this aspect in more detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūh.

قُلْ أَنْفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَّلَ مِنْكُمْ ۖ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَىٰ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُرْهُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

The first of these verses expresses hate and abhorrence for the hypocrites. Their spending for the cause of God has no significance in His eyes. He is not dependent on their spending in any way. He only accepts the spending of those who serve the cause of His religion with true faith and sincerity.

The second verse explains the sentence “you are a people who break promises” of the first verse. In other words, they deny God and His Messenger because they do not fulfil any of the requirements that faith in them entails. They come for prayers out of compulsion because they know that if they don’t come, they will not be able to include themselves among the believers. Same was the case with their spending for charity. Both these worship rituals become unacceptable because they are done as a show-off only. Readers may take a look at what I have written in explanation of verse 43 of Sūrah al-Nisā’. I have explained there that the prayer of the hypocrites was no prayer at all; it was acted out to deceive the believers so that they could regard them among themselves. Obviously, such a prayer can never make a person focus his attention towards God; it would lack passion and concentration.

فَلَا تَعْجَبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ ۖ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَرْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Whoever are blessed with wealth and children by God are a source of great treasure for a community if they also have faith and sincerity. Every well-wisher of such a community respects such people. This is because the extent of service they can provide to religion through their persons and wealth cannot be matched by others. Among these hypocrites too, there were many people who had wealth and children and could serve Islam very well and win great reward in the hereafter. Thus the Prophet (sws) also dearly wished that they are blessed with true faith and sincerity and by fulfilling their obligations towards God’s favours earn a high reward. But even when after trying his best, these people proved a lost cause, he was informed by God

38. Tell them: Whether you spend willingly or unwillingly, none of your spending will be accepted. You are a people who break promises. If their spending is not worth accepting, then the only reason is that they have shown disbelief in God and His Messenger. And if they come for prayer, it is because of compulsion and if they spend, they spend willingly.

39. So, do not give any importance to their wealth and children. God only desires to punish them in the life of this world through them, and they lose their lives in the state of disbelief.

to not give any importance to their wealth and children. They will not contribute in any way. In fact, if anything, they can potentially create problems for the believers.

The worldly punishment referred to here is the one which had become destined for the rejecters of the Prophet (sws) and whose details have been mentioned earlier. Obviously, if these hypocrites had adopted the same attitude as the disbelievers, their fate would have been no different.

It is evident from the words تَرْهَقُ أَنْفُسُهُمْ that those make the wealth and resources of this world to be a noose, their souls are dragged out of their bodies gradually. This noose grips them so strongly that it becomes virtually impossible for them to escape its grasp and revert to the right way.

وَيَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنْهُمْ لَيْسَ لَكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرُقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغْرَبًا أَوْ مَدَّحَلًا لَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾⁴⁰

The word حلف generally is used in the pejorative sense. People who do not have character try to mostly seek refuge in false oaths to prove themselves worthy. Thus it is explained at various instances in the Qur'ān that the hypocrites would try to compensate for their lack of character by swearing false oaths. In order to assure Muslims that they were among them, they would indulge in such swearing so that they should have no doubts in this regard. The Qur'ān has clarified that this is an absolute lie and only the rope of fear has made them cling to the believers. They have no place left to escape. They have already seen the fate of the Idolaters and that of the People of the Book too is before their eyes. Where can they run to? If they leave the country, their interests will suffer. Thus they have no option but to remain attached with the believers.

The verb فرق means “to be scared and worried” and فرقة refers to a coward.

The second of the verses cited explains what is said earlier. The implication is that they will do anything to protect their interests.

The expression جَهَّ الْفَرَسَ means تَغَلَّبَ عَلَى رَاقِبِهِ وَذَهَبَ بِهِ وَلَا يَنْشَى (the horse became out of the rider's control and ran off with him speedily). It means that the Prophet (sws) would not have been able to do anything and they would have dashed away. The real thing is that at the moment they are not finding any refuge and hence because of cowardice they are forced to align themselves with the believers.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّئْتِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَّمْ يُعْطُوا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا

40. And they repeatedly swear oaths by God to assure you that they are from among you even though they are not from among you. They are in fact cowards. Had they found an abode, a cave or a place to sit in, they would have broken their string and run frantically towards it.

أَتَمُّهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ^{٤١} وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ^{٤١} إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ^{٤١}

In the previous verse, the state of the wealthy hypocrites was referred to. Now the poor among them are alluded to.

Consider the words “And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: ‘God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God.’” They instruct them about the right attitude they should have adopted.

If instead of censuring, picking faults and thinking evil they had behaved magnanimously, they would have earned more reward from God as well the affection of His Messenger. Alas! Instead of adopting an honourable and sincere approach, they launched a campaign against the Messenger.

It may also be noted that the answer of such a conditional sentence is generally suppressed in classical Arabic. This creates emphasis in the sentence if the instance is of emphasis. Similarly, if the instance is of expressing sorrow or rebuke or anger or affection, then they too become more evident if it is in line with these instances respectively. I have unfolded this suppression in the translation.

إِنَّا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالسَّكِينِ وَالْعَبْدِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالنُّوَلْفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغُرْمَيْنِ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ

السَّبِيلِ^{٤٢} فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ^{٤٢} وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ^{٤٢}

This verse describes the heads in which charity can be distributed. The purpose is to make evident to those among the hypocrites – who were greedy for wealth and were not even eligible for charity – where it will be spent. It is subtly apparent from this that these hypocrites who censure the Prophet (sww) with regarding to charity for not giving them what they desired were not even entitled to it.

The word *sadaqāt* is a general term with respect to *zakāh*. It includes all wealth that is given to earn reward from God whether it is *zakāh* or charity. Since through this money, a person’s sincerity and strength of faith becomes evident, it is called *sadaqah*. Its origin is *sidq* whose essence is harmony between one’s words and deeds.

41. And among them are those also who censure you in the distribution of charity. If they receive from it, they remain happy and if they do not, they become furious. And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: “God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God.”

42. Charity in is only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are in charge of its set-up, and for those whose hearts are to be assured. Moreover, for the release of necks and to help those who have been inflicted with losses and for the way of God and for the welfare of the wayfarers. This is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise.

Following are the heads of *ṣadaqāt*.

(i) *الْفُقَرَاءُ وَالْمَسْكِينُ* (*al-fuqarā' wa al-masākīn*): Both these words are common in the sense that both refer to people in need. Thus, they are used in the Qur'ān interchangeably as well. However, there is a certain difference as well between the two. The word *faqīr* (singular of *fuqarā'*) is the opposite of *ghanī* (rich). Thus in verse 135 of Sūrah al-Nisā', it is stated: *إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَآلِهٖ أُولَىٰ بِهِمَا*. For this reason, every person who is not *ghanī* but is needy is actually a *faqīr* regardless of whether he asks for his needs or does not do so owing to his self-esteem. Thus for the needy who have this self-esteem, the word *fuqarā'* is used in verse 273 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The word *miskīn* (singular *masākīn*) implies a higher degree of poverty. The word *maskanat* includes helplessness, vulnerability and meekness.

(ii) *الْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا* (*al-‘āmilīna ‘alayhā*): This refers to all those people who are deputed to collect *ṣadaqāt* and to keep their record. Their salaries and office expenditures will be reimbursed under this head.

(iii) *الْمَوْلَقَةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ* (*al-mu'allafat-i qulūbuhum*): This includes all those who need to be kept aligned with the interest of Islam and the Muslims. At times, an Islamic government has to deal with certain influential elements who are not fully under its political control and if they are forced to come under its control, it is feared that they will cause harm by joining the army ranks. Especially in border areas, such people can pose a great threat if they turn into enemies or earn the sympathy of the enemy. It is in the interest of an Islamic government to keep them aligned. The way it is done is that they are financially supported. This is a political expense which an Islamic government can dispense through money found in other heads too. Such people can be non-Muslims too as well as those who are Muslims by name only. One benefit that can be drawn from this is to bring such elements close to the teachings of Islam.

One group of our jurists regards this head to be revoked once the Prophet (sws) had passed away or, in other words, the dominance of Islam had been achieved. However, in my opinion, this view does not carry much weight. This head is used in the political interest of Islam, as has just been indicated. It is governed by circumstances – that can arise at any time. Even a strong Islamic government at times needs to resort to it to circumvent any nuisance. This is because using force is not always an option and can create complications, which is against sagacity.

(iv) *فِي الرِّقَابِ* (*fī al-riqāb*): A governing noun is suppressed here and the actual construction is *فِي فِكَ الرِّقَابِ*. This money can also be spent to free the necks of slaves from the yokes of slavery. The use of the letter *فِي* here also shows that from this head all works that relate to their welfare which are prescribed for their freedom and strengthening their economic status can be financed.

(v) *الْغَرَامِينَ* (*al-ghārimīn*): The expression *غَرِمَ فِي التِّجَارَةِ* means that “such and such a person suffered a loss in his trade.” The word *غَرَامَةٌ* or *غَرَم* means penalty or loss. The word *ghārim* (singular of *ghārimīn*) is used for a person who has faced losses in his

business or is burdened under debt so much that he does not have the strength to pay it back. Under this head, money can be used to pay back the debts of such people and to support them so that they can once again stand on their feet and give benefit to the society through their abilities. It may be kept in mind that in an Islamic state, all illegal means to earning and all prohibited means of over-spending are forbidden. Hence the question that a *ghārim* has reached this state by adopting methods that are against the *shari'ah* or that the calamity he is suffering from is because of some illegal means does not even arise. The context and occasion of the verses show that here a *ghārim* does not refer to a criminal; it refers to a person who suffered losses while trying to earn a living or to a person who has to pay a debt or penalty.

(vi) فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (fī sabīlillāh): This is a comprehensive term under which money can be expended on undertakings like *jihād* and preaching and teaching religion. Circumstances and time may desire more emphasis on some of these and less on others; however, all ventures related to serve the cause of religion come under this head.

(vii) ابْنِ السَّبِيلِ (ibn al-sabīl): Its independent mention evidences the fact that a traveller is entitled to this money on the mere basis of being a traveller. Journeys reduce a person to such a state that even though he may not be strictly needy in the literal sense, since he is a stranger in a land, he becomes a dependent for his needs and thus becomes entitled to help. The money from this head can be used for helping such travellers, for the construction of roads and for their food-facilities and rest houses. It may be kept in mind that this head has been stated with the letter نِ. It becomes evident from this that money under this head can be spent on all undertakings related to facilitating and providing comfort to the travellers

A group of our jurists regards the particle ل in اِنشَاءً الصَّدَقَاتِ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ to specifically refer to تَمْلِكِ (exclusive personal-possession). Then, as a result, it deduces that *zakāh* and charity money cannot be spent on any project of social welfare related to the poor and needy that does not establish exclusive personal-possession of anyone but it benefits every one in their collective capacity. In my opinion, this view is not based on any strong argument. In the first place, the particle ل is not merely specific for exclusive personal possession; it has multiple meanings, and has been used in all these meanings in the Qur'ān. There is no reason to regard it specific for exclusive personal-possession. When the particle ل is also commonly used in the meanings of welfare, benefit and prerogative, why cannot it be taken in these meanings? Moreover, some heads in the verse are mentioned such that they are governed by the particle نِ, and the most obvious meaning of this particle is not exclusive personal-possession; on the contrary, it is service, prosperity and welfare.

Moreover, it is obvious that the amount of benefit that can be provided to the poor is far greater when money is spent on their projects of welfare rather than through *tamlīk*. Then why should the circle of this benefit be restricted by using the instrument of *tamlīk*? For more details on this topic, readers are advised to read my article *Mas'alah-e tamlīk* (the Issue of Tamlīk) in my book *Tawḍīḥāt*.

In the words “this is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise” the mandatory nature of the directive is referred to as well as it being based on knowledge and wisdom.

Section VI: (61-72)

In the succeeding verses, first the pranks and the harassing behaviour of the hypocrites are mentioned and they are warned on this. After that men and women from the hypocrites and men and women from the believers are compared so that faith and hypocrisy become evident before everyone. Such a comparison is also the most helpful in making facts more prominent and it also helps people in reforming themselves.

Readers may proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُذَوُّونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ قُلْ أُذُنٌ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ يَوْمَ مِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَيَوْمَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَحْمَةً
لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ يُذَوُّونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضَوْكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُرْضَوْهُ إِنَّ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَنْ يُحَادِدِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ
خَالِدًا فِيهَا ذَٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٣﴾ يَخْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
قُلِ اسْتَهِزَّؤُا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ قُلْ أ
بِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ
مِّنْكُمْ نَعْدَبُ طَآئِفَةً ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ
بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ ۚ سُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيحُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾
وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعْنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَ أَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا ۖ فَاسْتَبْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ
فَاسْتَبْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَبْتَعِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاصُوا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَ
ثُودٌ ۖ وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةِ ۖ أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ
كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ

عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ
حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ طَيِّبَةٌ
فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ۖ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾

And among them are those also who aggrieve the Prophet and say: “This person believes all that he hears.” Say: He intently hears what is good for you. He believes in God, trusts the believers and is mercy for those among you who have accepted faith. And those who are aggrieving God’s Messenger, there is a painful punishment for them. They swear in the name of God before you to satisfy you. Yet if they are believers, God and His Messenger are more worthy that he be pleased. Do they not know that he who opposes God and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell where he shall abide forever? This is great humiliation. (61-63)

The hypocrites fear that a *sūrah* may be revealed to them which exposes to them the secrets of their hearts. Say: Make fun. God is bound to expose what you fear. And if you ask them, they will say: “We were only jesting and entertaining ourselves.” Ask them: Were you jesting with God, His revelations and His Messenger? Don’t put forth lame excuses. You have renounced faith after accepting it. Even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers. (64-66)

Hypocrite men and Hypocrite women are all of the same type. They enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands. They have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them. These Hypocrites always break their promises. God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever. This alone is sufficient for them. And the curse of God be on them. And for them is an eternal torment like the ones who lived before you. They were mightier and blessed with greater wealth and more children than you. So, they benefited from their share and you also benefited from your share in the very way those before you benefited from their share and you also spoke nonsense as they did. It is these people whose deeds went waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the ones who shall be the losers. Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves. (67-70)

And believing men and believing women are friends to one another. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. It is these people whom God will bless with His mercy. God is Powerful, very Wise. God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow; they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all.

This alone is supreme success. (71-72)

Explanation

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ ۚ قُلْ أُذُنٌ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

The word أُذُن means “ear” and when this word is used as a metaphor for someone it carries a tone of disparagement for that person disguised in praise. It refers to his gullibility; he accepts whatever he hears from any Tom, Dick and Harry. It is disguised disparagement because to listen to everyone is in fact a praiseworthy attribute and speaks of a person’s decency; but at the same time it also refers to his lack of insight and vision.

The hypocrites would use this word for the Prophet (sws) keeping in view this meaning. They would make fun of God, His messenger and His revelations in their gatherings. When news of this behaviour would reach the Prophet (sws) through some means and he would express his displeasure at it, the hypocrites clarified their position before people by saying: he is a pious person; whatever he hears, he believes in it and on this basis becomes disillusioned from such sincere and obedient people as themselves; otherwise, how can words of disrespect be uttered by us? And by way of jest and entertainment, if some words of disrespect are uttered unintentionally, then this is an entirely different thing.

The words “Say: He intently hears what is good for you; He believes in God” are an answer to this claim. The Prophet’s ears are always open to their well-being. He always desires that their good intentions, good words and works reach his ear and make him happy. He is not interested to hear any of their evil words or works. A prophet’s affection for his followers is much greater than a father’s affection for his son. He is not after finding their mistakes; rather he is after finding their positive traits and at every instant wants to hear some good news about them. Thus if these hypocrites think that he is all ears for them, then this is true in this respect and this is actually a blessing for them. It is not something they should mock at him for.

The words “he believes in God, trusts the believers” imply that the notion they have about the Prophet (sws) that he listens to every Tom, Dick and Harry is wrong. He believes in God and only accepts that news which he receives from true and sincere believers. If God informs him about something regarding them, then what more can be closer to the truth? Similarly, if the believers report something to him about them,

43. And among them are those also who aggrieve the Prophet and say: “This person believes all that he hears.” Say: He intently hears what is good for you. He believes in God, trusts the believers and is merciful for those among you who have accepted faith. And those who are aggriving God’s Messenger, there is a painful punishment for them.

why should he not believe in it? In other words, the sources of the Prophet's information about them are not unfounded and frail. He is also not a gullible person and prone to having evil estimations. He is guided by God and listens to the believers. When the preposition ل is used with اِيَّان, it means “to accept or understand.”

The words “and is mercy for those among you who have accepted faith” mean that the Prophet (sws) is affection personified for those true in faith. He is not their ill-wisher so that he listens to their ill-wishers. He wants their betterment and their success in both this world and the next depends on becoming entitled to his affection and mercy by adhering to true faith. The verb اٰمَنُوْا here is in its real meaning; it refers to true faith and just to lay claim to faith. The latter – who want to remain in their state and also try to harass the Prophet (sws) – should remember that there is a painful torment.

٤٤ ﴿يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضَوْكُمْ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُولُهُ اَعْلَمُ اَنْ يُرْضَوْهُ اِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝﴾

This verse addresses the believers and exposes the oaths of the hypocrites at the right instance. In other words, what they are doing to prove their faith to be worthy is actually proving it unworthy. This reproach is the same as the one found in verse 49 (they have already in a trial). At times, the excuse for a sin is worst than the sin itself. The attitude of presenting an excuse by the hypocrites proved that they were more sinful. Had they been upright, they would have tried to please God and His Prophet (sws) instead of swearing false oaths to show the Muslims that the Prophet (sws) was gullible. This was a very deceptive scheme of working propaganda against him.

Here the singular pronoun in يُرْضُوْهُ is noteworthy. Since both God and His Messenger can be pleased in the same way, this pronoun has been used.

٤٥ ﴿اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْا اَنَّهٗ مَنْ يُحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ۚ ذٰلِكَ اَلْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۝﴾

The verbal noun مجادّة means “to become an enemy of someone.” The word فَاَنَّ is co-ordinated to اَنَّ.

This verse rebukes the hypocrites on their above-referred to propaganda. The implication is that instead of seeking forgiveness for their sins from God and pleasing His messenger, they have launched a campaign to prove their innocence by swearing false oaths. Their purpose is to strengthen the party they have set up against God and His messenger so that they can carry on their work more effectively. The question is that even after such a long period of preaching, has it not become evident to them that those who become the enemies of God and His messenger will abide forever in Hell,

44. They swear in the name of God before you to satisfy you. Yet if they are believers, God and His Messenger are more worthy that he be pleased.

45. Do they not know that he who opposes God and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell where he shall abide forever? This is great humiliation.

which is a great humiliation.

There is a subtle reference in the words “this is great humiliation” that if today they are able to save themselves from humiliation by playing this prank, what plan do they have to save themselves from the humiliation in the next world?

يَخْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۚ قُلْ اسْتَهِزُّوْا إِنَّا اللَّهُ مُخْرِجُ مَا تَخْذَرُونَ ﴿١٦﴾⁴⁶

The word يَخْذَرُ means “to be scared and to be on guard.” The expression تُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ means تَقْرَأُ عَلَيْهِمْ (it should be recited out to them).

This verse brings forth the background in which the hypocrites had launched a campaign to prove their innocence: up till then, they were criticized in the form of insinuations so that they were not humiliated much and if they wanted to mend their affairs, they had its opportunity; however, in this *sūrah*, they see a change in style and some of their inner secrets have been discussed; this has worried them lest a *sūrah* is revealed which exposes all their secrets. Thus it was because of this fear that they tried to prove their innocence through false oaths. It should be noted that just as for the Idolaters and the People of the Book, this *sūrah* is the last and final word, similarly, for the hypocrites too, it is the last and final word. They are fully exposed in it, as will become evident from succeeding verses.

وَلَيْنِ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۚ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٧﴾⁴⁷

The real meaning of خَوْضُ is “to enter a sea.” However, when it is used with reference to conversation, it can also mean “to indulge in hair-splitting” as well as “to wander from away from the actual meaning by drifting to other derivative meanings one after the other.”

This is actually an example of another excuse of a sin presented by the hypocrites that is worse than the sin itself.

لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ ۖ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ نَعْفُ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَآئِفَةً ۚ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾⁴⁸

The hypocrites are told to not indulge in excuses because they are worse than the sins for which they are being presented. What more does it require for a person to be a criminal if he mocks at and makes fun of God’s revelations? This is nothing but

46. The hypocrites fear that a *sūrah* may be revealed to them which exposes to them the secrets of their hearts. Say: Make fun. God is bound to expose what you fear.

47. And if you ask them, they will say: “We were only jesting and entertaining ourselves.” Ask them: Were you jesting with God, His revelations and His Messenger?

48. Don’t put forth lame excuses. You have renounced faith after accepting it. Even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers.

reverting to disbelief after expressing belief. If they had laid claim to faith, then it was their obligation to provide its proof through their deeds but their deeds provide proof of disbelief. This is because making fun of God, His revelations and His messenger is nothing but disbelief. In verse 70 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, this issue has been discussed already.

Consider now the words “even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers.” It is evident from earlier verses that there were many factions among the hypocrites that had different levels of hypocrisy and mischief in them. Some of their factions were very dangerous, as will become evident from later verses. They had plotted such schemes to harm Islam and Muslims that even one of them had materialized, it would have overshadowed the ones plotted by open enemies. These words are about such factions. Thus, later in this very sūrah, the founders of the Ḍarār mosque and some other factions are mentioned along with the fate they met.

الْمُفْسِقُونَ وَالْمُفْسِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ
إِنَّ الْمُنْفِقِينَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتِ وَالْكٰفِرَاتِ أَجَنَّهُنَّ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ وَلَعَنَهُمُ
اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَثَرُوا مَالًا وَآوْلَادًا فَاسْتَبْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ
فَاسْتَبْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَبْتَعْتُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا أُولَٰئِكَ حِطَّةُ آعِبَالِهِمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَقَوْمِ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَأَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ
وَالْمُؤْتَفٰكَةِ أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُظِلَّيَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

Until now, the hypocrites were part of the believers because of their claim to faith. Here, for the first time, they are made distinct by describing their traits and they are regarded to be on the same side in this world and in the hereafter as the Idolaters and

49. Hypocrite men and Hypocrite women are all of the same type. They enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands. They have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them. These Hypocrites always break their promises. God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever. This alone is sufficient for them. And the curse of God be on them. And for them is an eternal torment like the ones who lived before you. They were mightier and blessed with greater wealth and more children than you. So, they benefited from their share and you also benefited from your share in the very way those before you benefited from their share and you also spoke nonsense as they did. It is these people whose deeds went waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the ones who shall be the losers. Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves.

the People of the Book. This is also a warning to them that they should not try any further to remain intermingled with the believers. At the same time, these verses inform the believers too to not let such black sheep enter their folds. In other words, this was the first step to cleanse a Muslim society from unwanted elements. It also indicates to the believers that just as they have declared acquittal from the Idolaters and the People of the Book, they should also sift out these claimants of faith from their ranks who are similar to these two factions as regards their deeds and morals.

Here besides hypocrite men, their women have also been specifically mentioned and regarded to have an equal stake and share. The purpose is to admonish them too and inform them that they will meet the same fate as their men. They will not be able to save themselves if they do not protect themselves from God's scourge. To be a subservient category is no excuse in matters of religion. Every soul whether man or woman is responsible for its own salvation. Evident from this is also that women too had a prominent share in this mischief of hypocrisy. This is especially because the love for life and wealth is the foremost cause of hypocrisy. Women have the greatest share in invigorating men with this love. A narrative states that wives and children make a person stingy and cowardly. The real ailment of the hypocrites mentioned earlier is that the love of wealth and children had prevailed upon them with regard to the requisites of faith.

The words "they enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands" show that all their actions are opposite to what their religion says. They stop people from they should urge them to and vice versa. They close their fists because of stinginess and mock at those who spend their hard-earned wealth for the cause of God and thereby aggrieve them.

The words "they have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them" depict the reason for their foolishness and deprivation. In verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is similarly stated: *وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ*.⁵⁰ God becoming indifferent to them means that He deprives them of His guidance and the urge to do good. This guidance and urge is only provided to those who keep Him in remembrance.

The words "these Hypocrites always break their promises" expose them: no one should regard them to be claimants of faith because they say so. This is not true. They actually go back on their words and are traitors. After pledging the agreement of "to listen and to obey," they have broken it and have tried to uproot Islam by while professing to be a part of it. For this reason, they have broken all records of traitorship and dishonesty.

The words "God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever" depict their fate in the

50. And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

hereafter. Hell will totally destroy them as depicted by the words “this alone is sufficient for them.” Nothing more will be required.

God’s curse will be on them as a result of which all doors of hope will close. A perpetual torment will prevail upon them; they will never be able to escape from it.

The words “like the ones who lived before you” directly address the hypocrites and threaten them. This enhances the intensity of the warning. They should not arrogantly think that since they have an abundance in wealth and children, their attitude is not disliked by God. So if He has given you so much in this world, He gave even more to those before them. But it so happened that when they had received their destined benefit from this life, they were destroyed by God. Like them, the hypocrites too have gained what was destined for them and have also indulged in hair-splitting like them; now their own time of destruction is at hand. Just the deeds of the earlier people went waste in this world and the next, their deeds too will do so and they too will end up as losers. The implication is that they should not look at their wealth and children; they should in fact look at their deeds. The former are given by God to the wretched and the miscreants too. His verdicts are actually passed on the character and conduct of people and not on their wealth.

Consider the verse: “Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves.” Names of the past nations are furnished here that were referred to earlier. The anecdotes of all these nations have been mentioned in Sūrah al-A‘rāf. The nation of Abraham (sws) refers to the nation he invited to monotheism and then after losing hope in them migrated from them. The “overturned settlements” refer to the city of Lot (sws). God communicated the truth in a conclusive way to all these nations through His messengers. They denied them and continued to adhere to their rebelliousness. As a consequence, God destroyed them. The implication is that history is going to repeat itself for the hypocrites now.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْبَعْرِفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ النَّكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكِنٍ طَيِّبَةٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٥٢﴾

51. And believing men and believing women are friends to one another. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. It is these people whom God will bless with His mercy. God is Powerful, very Wise. God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow;

After explaining the character of hypocrite men and women, these verses depict the character of believing men and women. When believing men go out to wage war for the cause of God, believing women do not try to stop them; on the contrary, they encourage them from the depth of their hearts. Moreover, through their sacrifice, selflessness and faithfulness cooperate with them in this venture and in this way themselves become entitled to reward.

The contrast between the two groups is clearly brought out by the two sets of verses. Readers can compare them.

The words “it is these people whom God will bless with His mercy” show that when both have different attitudes towards God, they are dealt differently too by Him. Men and women of the hypocrites are cursed, as depicted in the earlier verses.

The attributes of God being Powerful and very Wise entail that all His actions are based on mercy and justice. The letter س appended to سَيُزَكِّيهِمْ shows that very soon these glad tidings will materialize for the believers.

Consider the verses: “God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow; they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all. This alone is supreme success.” They occur in contrast to verse 68 where the hypocrite men and women are warned. The “pleasure of God” and “eternal orchards” bring out the stark contrast with verse 68 where curse is mentioned for hypocrite men and women. Just as being cursed comprehensively depicts deprivation from all favours, similarly, “pleasure of God” is a comprehensive expression for the abiding favours and blessings of God. While reading these verses, readers may keep in mind the words “these Hypocrites always break their promises” of verse 67. Contrasting verses are very helpful in bringing out the coherence in a discourse.

Section VII: (73-80)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is told that because of his magnanimity and graciousness, these hypocrites are still clinging on to Islam and the Muslims. He should now become stern with them so that if they can mend their affairs they should; otherwise, they should meet their fate. They utter words of disbelief in their gatherings and try to assure him through false oaths. They had very dangerous intentions but God did not let them materialize. God and His Messenger have blessed them with favours. Instead of becoming thankful on this, their animosity and mischief-mongering against Islam has increased. They would say that if God gives them wealth, they will generously spend it for His cause. However, when God did give them wealth, they

they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all. This alone is supreme success.

turned away from Him and His messenger. This attitude firmly implanted hypocrisy in such a way in their hearts that now it cannot be uprooted.

After this, it is stated that not only have they become stingy, they mock, deride and discourage the believers who heartily and humbly spend from their hard-earned wealth. The purpose is to stop them from spending. At the same time, the Prophet (sws) has been sternly stopped from seeking forgiveness for them: they are no longer worthy of this affection from him; they deserve to be treated harshly in every respect.

Readers may proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا ۖ وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا ۚ وَمَا نَقَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكْ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمْ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا آلِيمًا ۖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن عَاهَدَ اللَّهُ لَئِنْ أَتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَأَعَقَبَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفَعُنَا إِلَى يَوْمِ نَلْقَاَهُ إِلَّا جُهْدُهُمْ ۚ بَلَا أَخْلَفُوا ۚ اللَّهُ مَا وَعَدُوا وَبَلَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٧٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ ۖ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۖ إِنَّ تَسْتَعْغِرُ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

O Prophet! Wage *jihad* against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be stern with them. And Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode. They swear oaths by God that they did not utter that statement whereas they have uttered that word of disbelief and renounced faith after embracing it. And they wanted what they have not been able to obtain. This enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches. If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land. (73-74)

And there are those among them too who promised God: “If God blesses us with His bounty, we shall generously spend in charity and do shall be among those who do virtuous deeds in abundance.” So, when God gave them out of His grace, they started to show stinginess in it and turned their faces in evasion. Then, as a consequence, God implanted hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they

went back on their promise with God and because they continued to lie. Do they not know that God is aware of their secrets and their whisperings and God knows very well everything that is hidden? The whisperings of those who censure Muslims regarding charity who spend it whole-heartedly and the poor have only that to spend which they earn from their hard labour; so, they make fun of them. God made fun of them and for them is a painful torment. Whether you ask forgiveness for them or not, even if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God is not going to forgive them. This is because they denied God and His Messenger and God does not guide those who breach promises. (75-80)

Explanation

52. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَرِئَاسَ النَّاصِيَةِ ۚ

The verse primarily emphasizes on the Prophet (sws) to totally change his attitude with hypocrites and sternly call them to account. However, at the same time, the disbelievers are also referred to. The purpose is to show that now these hypocrites belong to their category. The word *jihād* encapsulates both war and stern accountability. In other words, the Prophet (sws) should wage such war against the disbelievers which he has been directed to under the declaration of acquittal. He should no longer be gracious to them. They have not valued his magnanimity and take wrong advantage of it. As a result, they have become even more audacious in their mischief. They use false excuses and false oaths as their shields. In spite of knowing this reality, the Prophet (sws) has been courteous to them. This should now end and he should now be strict with them in every matter so that they know that their veil of falsehood and deception will soon be lifted to expose them. Now, they will either have to become true Muslims or meet the fate that has been destined for the disbelievers. Readers may look up what I have written under verse 43. The verse under discussion is its further explanation.

Consider the sentence “and Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode.” It implies that in this world, these hypocrites will face the sternness of the Prophet (sws) and his followers and in the hereafter they will end up in the evil abode of Hell. This is because such ruthless angels are deputed on it who will show no softness; they will follow every directive of God, as is mentioned in verse 6 of Sūrah al-Taḥrīm.

يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا ۚ وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَبُوا بِهَا نَمًّا ۚ يَنَاقِلُونَ ۚ وَمَا تَقْصُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يَعْدُبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۚ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي

52. O Prophet! Wage *jihād* against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be stern with them. And Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode.

الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دُونِ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

It has been stated earlier that the hypocrites would make fun of God, His revelations and His messenger in their gatherings. However, when they are asked about this, they just evade answering it. Instead, they swear oaths and assure the Muslims that they did no such thing and that they were only jesting. While referring to these false oaths, the term “word of disbelief” is used.

If the previous verse had included them in the category of disbelievers, this verse actually spells out its reason. By making fun they are guilty of disbelief and have thereby renounced faith after accepting it. This shows the intensity of their crime. It may be noted that God’s anger for those who lay claim to faith but with their deeds attest to disbelief is more than His anger for the disbelievers. This is because in this attitude deception is added to disbelief. In verses 2-3 of Sūrah al-Şaff, this reality is stated thus: ⁵⁴كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ. It is for this reason that it is mentioned in verse 145 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ that the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell.

The words “and they wanted what they have not been able to obtain” subtly allude to all their evil plans and also their deprivations and failures. In other words, if they had been able to, they would have tried to uproot Islam from the land but God did not allow them to. In verse 48, I have referred to certain pranks and conspiracies of the hypocrites and more pranks will be mentioned ahead. However, on every occasion they miserably failed because God exposed their plans at the right time.

The words “this enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches” point to their wretched and worthless nature: while God and His messenger showed them favour, they in return started to make fun of them and day and night conspired to root out Islam from the land. Here, it needs to be kept in mind that before the advent of Islam, the people of Madīnah were very poor. After its advent, when conquests took place their financial condition changed. In particular, the hypocrites became very wealthy. In the first place, the Prophet (sws) would give them more to show affection; moreover, because of their greediness they would also take more by fabricating various excuses. Furthermore, they never spent what they would obtain. They would openly ignore any

53. They swear oaths by God that they did not utter that statement whereas they have uttered that word of disbelief and renounced faith after embracing it. And they wanted what they have not been able to obtain. This enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches. If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land.

54. Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God’s sight that you should say something what you never do.

opportunity to spend in the cause of God. Thus these people became wealthy because of Islam. In return, they continued to connive and conspire against it.

Consider next the words “If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land.” They sound a warning. Their worldly punishment will be the same as the one which has become destined for the disbelievers and idolaters and in the hereafter too, they will be their companions. They will be isolated and left alone by their allies because the latter would be too busy in trying to escape their own fate. They will not be able to help their own selves, let alone others.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ لَئِنْ اٰتٰنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَلَمَّا اٰتٰهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمٍ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ بِمَا اٰخَلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا وَعَدُوْا وَبِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Reference here is to those among them who has become wealthy because of Islam. The word تَوَلَّوْا generally means “they turned away” implying that there was no hope left for them to come back; however, here it is qualified by the verb مُّعْرِضُوْنَ; thus it implies that when they hear of spending in charity, they walk away such that they never even look back.

It is a strange weakness of a person that until he is not able to obtain a thing, he expresses the resolve that as soon as he is able to acquire it, he will not waste it like others in a wrong way; in fact, he will spend it for such and such a noble cause and set an example of justice and piety. However, as soon as he is able to acquire it, he does not even remember this commitment; he, in fact, regards it to be a consequence of his own effort and entitlement. He spends it for the cause of Satan instead of spending it for the cause of God. Very few are the fortunate who use what they obtain in the right way, thinking that this is an obligation they owe to its giver.

The word أعقاب means to make something manifest itself as a consequence of another.

The last verse implies that these people nourished hypocrisy in themselves for a long period of time. It did not enter them accidentally; it was a consequence of deliberately breaking a promise and of continuous lies and deception. Only through death will they be able to relieve themselves of it. Believers should not expect that

55. And there are those among them too who promised God: “If God blesses us with His bounty, we shall generously spend in charity and do shall be among those who do virtuous deeds in abundance.” So, when God gave them out of His grace, they started to show stinginess in it and turned their faces in evasion. Then, as a consequence, God implanted hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they went back on their promise with God and because they continued to lie.

they will have the urge to repent and mend themselves. Only when the reality comes before them like the sun will this thick veil of their hearts be lifted. Something similar is said about the builders of the Darār mosque later in verse 110 of this *sūrah*: لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (This building which they have built will always be a basis of doubt in their hearts except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise.)

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سَرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٥٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يَلْبِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

The words “do they not know that God ...” express wonder. The verse implies that even after such a long period of instruction and education, purification and cleansing and after being revealed so many facts, so thick-headed are these people that they could not know that God knows all the secrets. The fact is that God knows everything is expressed in the Qur’ān in the form of a verb and also in the form of an adjective. For this reason, here and even more clearly at other instances in the Qur’ān, the all-embracing knowledge of God is expressed in the form of a verb as well as an adjective. Keeping in view the coherence in the discourse, this verse is a prelude to the next one in which the whisperings and criticisms of the hypocrites are exposed. They did this among their circles to discourage sincere believers.

The الَّذِينَ in verse 79, in my opinion, is a permutative (*badal*) of the accusative pronoun هُمْ in نَجْوَاهُمْ in verse 78. Though I am not fully convinced about this, I have translated the verse keeping in view this interpretation. Zamakhsharī too has referred to it.⁵⁷

Both مُطَّوِّع and مُطَّوِّع are the same words. The latter refers to a person who does not remain content to merely fulfil his obligations but out of his own will and strength does optional deeds of virtue in abundance as well.

The word لَبَسَ means “to blame,” “to censure” and “to deride.”

In the earlier verses, it was stated that the hypocrites showed evasion in spending for the cause of God; not it is being told that not only do they not spend themselves, they cannot see others doing this too. They censure and deride those who do so. As for the generous and sincere Muslims who spent with generosity and large-heartedness,

56. Do they not know that God is aware of their secrets and their whisperings and God knows very well everything that is hidden? The whisperings of those who censure Muslims regarding charity who spend it whole-heartedly and the poor have only that to spend which they earn from their hard labour; so, they make fun of them. God made fun of them and for them is a painful torment.

57. Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, 279.

they would call them people who were fame-greedy and show-offs and that they did it to over-awe others with their religiosity and generosity. As for the poor Muslims who did not have anything to spend and spent whatever little they could earn from their hard labour, they would make fun of them and make sarcastic remarks to discourage them. Typically they would say that these people had become more generous than the proverbial Hātim Ṭā'ī.

It is the mentality of the stingy that they want others to be stingy as well so that no one exposes their own stinginess. A person with severed nose wants others to be like him too so that there is no one to point out his own physical defect. The hypocrites too had the same mentality. It also satisfied their emotions of enmity against Islam. They did not want to spend a penny for Islam nor did they want others to do so. When against their wish, they saw others spending generously for Islam as if they are filling their own treasures – so much so that a labourer would happily spend by sacrificing the needs of his family as if he is gaining a huge reward in exchange for a few pennies – they would writhe in anger. They would vent their emotions by censuring and disparaging such people.

The sentence “God made fun of them” is similar to what is said in verse 15 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The implication is that they make fun of the believers, while God makes fun of them by giving them more respite so that they do whatever they want to. He will then seize them from where they would not even expect.

اِسْتَعْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ۖ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُوْلِهِ ۚ وَ

اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

This verse is a further manifestation of the directive of being stern with the hypocrites given earlier. The Prophet (sws) was an embodiment of affection and graciousness. In spite of all the mischief played by them, their salvation was dear to him like the rest of his followers. Just as he would seek God’s forgiveness for others, he would also do so for the hypocrites. But the latter became so hard-hearted that they were not prepared to accept people being well-wishers of Islam. In fact, they, as a rule, would discourage well-wishers. At this, the Almighty stopped him from seeking forgiveness for these callous people and that too with the intensity depicted in this verse. The word “seventy” is not meant in its literal sense; it connotes a large number. This style is very common in Arabic and in Urdu too.

The words “this is because they denied God and His Messenger” state the reason for this intensity. In other words, forgiveness is for those who believe in God and His

58. Whether you ask forgiveness for them or not, even if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God is not going to forgive them. This is because they denied God and His Messenger and God does not guide those who breach promises.

Messenger; how can it for those who do not even believe in them. It should be kept in mind that this verse proclaims the lack in faith of those who not only claimed to have faith in God and His Messenger but would also offer the prayer to show off, as has been pointed out earlier. However, because of their misdeeds alluded to before God did not accept their claim to faith.

The guidance mentioned in “and God does not guide those who breach promises” is with reference to the objective and consequence. Readers may look up what I have written under verse 74 earlier.

Section VIII: (81-89)

These verses were revealed during the battle of Tabūk regarding the hypocrites who stayed back after fabricating excuses and were very happy at their deception. The context of these verses is very evident.

Text and Translation

فَرِحَ الْخَلْفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلَيْضَ حَكُومًا قَلِيلًا وَلَيَبْكَوْا كَثِيرًا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْفُقُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخُلَفَاءِ وَلَا تَضِلُّوا عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ مَتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَلَا تَعْجَبْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَرْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَإِذَا أَنْزَلْتَ سُورَةَ أَنْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُو الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقُعْدَاءِ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ لَكِنَّ الرَّسُولَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٧﴾

Those who had been left behind were very happy at being left behind from God and His Messenger, and they disliked that they wage *jihad* for the cause of God with their persons and their wealth. And they said: “Do not go out in this heat.” Say: The fire of Hell is far hot. Would that they understood! Thus they should laugh less and shed more tears because of what they have been doing. So, if God takes you back to any of their groups and they seek permission from you to go out for *jihad*, say: You shall

never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind. (81-83)

And when any of them dies, never offer his funeral prayer and never stand on his grave. They rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises. And do not give any importance to their wealth or children. God only intends to punish them through these in the life of this world and their souls depart in the state of disbelief. And when a *sūrah* is revealed: “Fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger,” then even those among them who are able to do so, come to you to ask for reprieve, and say: “Leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind.” They preferred to be with those women who stay behind. And their hearts were sealed; so, now they understand nothing. The Messenger of God and they too who accepted faith with him, however, have waged *jihād* with their persons and wealth. And it is they for whom there are favours and blessings and it is they who shall succeed. God has prepared for them orchards beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. This alone is supreme success. (84-89)

Explanation

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ⁵⁹

The word مُخَلَّف means “he who is left behind.” From this meaning, the word مُخَلَّفُونَ is used to connote those who had evaded the campaign of Tabūk by presenting false excuses. By using this word for them, the Qur’ān has explained their real status: outwardly, they had come to the Prophet (sws) to excuse themselves; however, in reality, they are those who were left behind and ignored. The Prophet (sws) of God knowing full well that their excuses were baseless accepted them because it was better that such miscreants stay back. If they go out for war, who knows what mischief they will spread.

The word خلاف is used in two meanings in the Qur’ān. One of its meanings is “in converse order” as in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah: أَوْ تَقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ⁶⁰. The second is “after” as in verse 76 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl: وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبِثُونَ خِلْفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا⁶¹.

Here it occurs in its second meaning. The fact is that if they have succeeded in their ploy, it is nothing good for them; it is in fact going to produce evil consequences for

59. Those who had been left behind were very happy at being left behind from God and His Messenger, and they disliked that they wage *jihād* for the cause of God with their persons and their wealth. And they said: “Do not go out in this heat.” Say: The fire of Hell is far hot. Would that they understood!

60. “Or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides.”

61. “They will not be able to stay back for long after you.”

them. The goat or sheep that is left behind its herd or shepherd can become an easy prey for Satan who goes after it like a wolf.

The words “and they disliked that they wage *jihād*” is the opposite of what is said at the beginning of the verse. In other words, what should have made them happy was disliked by them and vice versa.

The last part of the verse shows that they even tried to convince others to not go out for war by scaring them of the hot weather at hand. It is known that the Muslim army marched to Tabūk in the hot summer. However, little do they know that the sizzling of Hell will be far greater than the climate they may face here.

فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلًا وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا ۖ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

The verse implies that if these people will jump into the fire of Hell while escaping the heat of the weather, then in lieu of their deeds, they should cry more and laugh less. The previous verse says that these people have become devoid of insight. For this reason, they are happy at their misfortune, as if they have achieved a great feat. Generally our exegetes have taken this statement of regret as a statement of information. I do not agree with this interpretation. Here both the deed and its fate have been made evident. This is because a person who has insight can see his fate in the mirror of his deeds done in this world and is affected by it the way he should be. Yet, the blind and deaf are deprived of this.

فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ۖ إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْقُعُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاتَّعِدُوا مَعَ الْخُلَفَاءِ ﴿٦٣﴾

The verb رجع is used both transitively and intransitively. The style of this verse shows that these verses were revealed during the journey to Tabūk. Thus the words “God takes you back” clearly imply: “He takes you back from this journey.”

The second thing which this verse indicates is that due to the misdeeds of the hypocrites stated above, the Prophet (sws) had developed abhorrence and hate for them. So much so, he did not even want to look at them. This disgust of the Prophet (sws) was right in line with the directive of God. For this reason, it is stated here that even though these people are not worthy of being looked at, the Prophet (sws) should sternly turn down any request they may make for participation in any future war

62. Thus they should laugh less and shed more tears because of what they have been doing.

63. So, if God takes you back to any of their groups and they seek permission from you to go out for *jihād*, say: You shall never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind.

campaign in case God makes him meet any of their groups in his return journey. They will make their request to hide their shame and to show that they are still loyal. This is in fact an explanation of an aspect of the directive mentioned in verse 74 in which the Prophet (sws) has been asked to deal firmly with them.

The third indication in it is about the notion which the hypocrites housed in their hearts: they reckoned that since this time the Muslim army will be facing a strong Roman army, it will not return home. It is deference to this that the verse says that if God, contrary to this notion of the hypocrites, makes the Prophet (sws) meet any of their groups. The hypocrites were guilty of such a notion at the time of Hudaibiyah too. Verse 12 of Sūrah al-Faṭḥ refers to it in the following words: *بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَّنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا* (in fact, you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people).

Consider the words “Say: You shall never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind.” They ask the Prophet (sws) to disallow the hypocrites from participating in the greatest collective responsibility. The purpose is to humiliate them and expose them. Hitherto they had been part of the Muslims on the bases of various excuses and pretexts. Until then, they would try to ask for exemption from *jihād*; now, the Prophet (sws) is asked to not permit them for this endeavour if they ask to. This is because they had been admonished much earlier, as is indicated by verse 15 of Sūrah al-Faṭḥ. This style can be both to negate an urge and to prohibit. In my opinion, in the Sūrah Faṭḥ verse the former is the case, while in the verse under discussion, the latter is the case.

64. وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَمَا تَوَّاهُمْ فَسَقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Here another harsh and in fact the final step is stated to expel the hypocrites from the Muslim collectivity. Earlier in verse 80, the Prophet (sws) has already been asked to not pray for their forgiveness. The current verse takes a step ahead. It is as if both in their life and death, Muslims have been asked to sever their relations from them. The last link of a person has with his collectivity is that after his death, his fraternity buries him and he goes away to his creator with the provision of their supplications. This prohibition now cut off this last link with them too.

Consider the last sentence: “they rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises.” The word فسق means “to break promises” and “to rebel.” In other words, if these people lay claim to faith and also observe religious rituals just to put up a show, they have broken the covenant they had made with God and His Messenger. The indication is to their misdeeds alluded to earlier.

64. And when any of them dies, never offer his funeral prayer and never stand on his grave. They rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises.

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

This verse has been explained earlier in the *sūrah* under verse 55.

وَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ أَنْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُوا الطَّلُوفِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ادْزَنْ لَنَا مَعَ الْفَاعِلِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Just as the word قرآن or كتاب is used at some instances for a part of the Qur'ān or to a directive mentioned in it, the word سورة (*sūrah*) is also used for some section of it and not as a term.

In “fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger,” the word “faith” is used in its complete meaning. This implies that they should go out for *jihād* with God’s Messenger to bear witness to their faith in God.

The word طول means “capability” and “affluence.” Verse 86 says that when they are asked to wage war for the cause of God, they prove spineless in their claim to faith. Even the healthy among them and those who have wealth and the provision of weapons – what to speak of the poor – come to the Prophet (sws) with fabricated excuses.

In my opinion, the words “leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind” express their mental feeling. At some instances in the Qur’ān, a statement of the Jews is cited: سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا (We listened and We disobeyed) even though they actually said: سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا (We listened and obeyed). However, since the former was their heart’s call, the Qur’ān stated the testimony of their hearts as words uttered from their tongues. It is as if they did not say سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا (We listened and obeyed); they actually said: سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا (We listened and We disobeyed).

In a similar way, these hypocrites presented some excuses and compulsions. The reality was that they were cowards and wanted an easy sailing. Instead of going out with the combatants, they wanted to stay back with the women, the handicapped and the disabled. It is their excuses which the Qur’ān has alluded to in the form of their words. This has produced a subtle sarcasm, examples of which can be seen at other instances in the Qur’ān too.

The word خَوَالِف is used for women because men go out for war and other chores

65. And do not give any importance to their wealth or children. God only intends to punish them through these in the life of this world and their souls depart in the state of disbelief.

66. And when a *sūrah* is revealed: “Fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger,” then even those among them who are able to do so, come to you to ask for reprieve, and say: “Leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind.” They preferred to be with those women who stay behind. And their hearts were sealed; so, now they understand nothing.

from their houses, while they look after the children and the houses by staying back.

The hearts of the hypocrites were sealed as a result of this attitude they had adopted.

لَكِنَّ الرُّسُولَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٩﴾⁶⁷

These verses depict the fate of true and staunch believers. The purpose is to praise the sincere among them and also to stir the honour of these hypocrites: the true companions of the Prophet (sws) do not present excuses like these hypocrites do when they are asked to prepare for war; on the contrary, they wage war through their persons and their wealth.

Section IX: (90-99)

In the earlier verses, the hypocrites living in the city were discussed. They inhabited Madinah and its suburbs. Coming up is the mention of the hypocrites living in the rural areas and villages. Both had the same type of ailments and the directive stated is also the same for both. In this regard, a list of the actual handicapped is also mentioned so that there is no ambiguity between those who were only presenting themselves as handicapped and the actual ones. Since this was a decisive verdict about the hypocrites and it was feared that the innocent too might wrongly be dragged into it, it was essential to draw a clear line between the two.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا اتَّوَكَّلُوا لَمْ يُخْلِصُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ مِنْ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا أَلَّا

67. The Messenger of God and they too who accepted faith with him, however, have waged *jihad* with their persons and wealth. And it is they for whom there are favours and blessings and it is they who shall succeed. God has prepared for them orchards beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. This alone is supreme success.

يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يَخْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ تُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَأَ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ سَيَخْلِفُونَكُمْ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَتَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ قَاعًا رَضُوا عَنْهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ رَجَسٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ يَخْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لَتَرْضُوا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾ الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَاللَّهُ سَيَّعٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَاتٍ الرَّسُولُ أَلَّا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

And from among the villagers too came people guilty of making excuses that they too be exempted, and those who lied to God and His Messenger stayed back. A painful torment will seize those among them who disbelieved. (90)

There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: "I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance," they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. Only they are to blame who seek reprieve from you even though they are wealthy. They were satisfied to remain with those women who stay in their homes, and God sealed their hearts. Thus they became deprived of knowledge. (91-93)

When you people return to them, they will present excuses before you. Say: Do not make excuses; we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances. Now God and His Messenger will observe your deeds. Then you will be brought before Him who knows what is open and what is hidden, and He will inform you of all your misdeeds. On your return, these people will swear before you oaths by God that you forgive them. So, just ignore them. They are filth in entirety, and Hell is their abode because of their misdeeds. They will swear in front of you to

become pleased with them. Even if you become pleased with them, God will not be pleased with these people who break promises. These villagers are stronger in their disbelief and hypocrisy and are more worthy that they be unaware of the bounds of what God has revealed to His Messenger. And God knows everything and is very wise. (94-97)

And among these villagers, there are those also who regard spending in the way of God to be a penalty and wait for you a turn of fortune. Let bad fortune fall on them and God hears and knows all. And among them, there are those also who believe in God and in the last day and regard what they spend and the supplications of the Messenger as a means of procuring God's nearness. So, indeed, this is a means of nearness for them. God shall admit them into His mercy. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (98-99)

Explanation

وَجَاءَ الْبُعْدُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ⁶⁸

The word مُعَذَّرُ refers to a liar and to someone who concocts lame excuses to shirk responsibilities. The difference between مُعَذَّرُ and مُتَعَذِّرُ is that the excuse of the latter can be false and also true in some instances; however, the former always refers to a person who fabricates phony excuses.

The word أعراب is the plural of أعرابي and refers to villagers and Bedouins. Here it refers to those who dwelled in the suburbs and deserts of Madīnah. Being over-awed by the rising power of Islam, they had submitted to its political rule but faith had not actually entered their hearts. In the first place, it was not the spiritual part of Islam that had attracted them; it was more of its political might, as just referred to. Secondly, since they were far away from the centre, it was neither possible to make befitting arrangements for their education and instruction nor were they themselves prepared to give time to go to Madīnah for this purpose because of their pressing agricultural and animal husbandry needs. Those capable among them could have tried to reform and improve themselves if they wanted and could have gone to Madīnah on various occasions also to benefit from the company of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, the majority among them were those who knew Islam by name only and were totally unaware of its bounds and restrictions and were crude and uncouth. It was these people who later became apostates and in order to curb their mischief, Abū Bakr (rta) had to take bold measures.

The verse states that just as there were ones who came to the Prophet (sws) to excuse themselves and seek exemption, there were others who dishonoured their

68. And from among the villagers too came people guilty of making excuses that they too be exempted, and those who lied to God and His Messenger stayed back. A painful torment will seize those among them who disbelieved.

promise with God and His Messenger. They did not even take the pain to present any excuse and sat in their homes while completely ignoring the call to wage war.

The word مِنْهُمْ (from them) in the last part of the verse is meant to show that there were some true and sincere believers in Islam among them too who took the initiative in showing sacrifice and selflessness – as is clarified ahead. For this reason, it is said that those who have committed disbelief by audaciously fabricating excuses for not fulfilling their obligations and remaining behind will be visited by a painful punishment. Only they are an exception to this who abided by their covenant with God and also those who were handicapped in reality.

كَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا آتَاكَ لِتَحْبِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْبِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَوَلَّوْا وَأَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَرَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ إِنَّا السَّيِّئِينَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَاذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءٌ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ ۖ وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

These verses point out the difference between people who had genuine excuses and those who were just making lame excuses. The purpose was to expose the latter and secure the former from any blame of hypocrisy.

The condition mentioned is because there can be many sick and poor who can try to cause harm to Islam and to the Muslims whilst sitting in their homes through their conspiracies and connivances. Such people will not be absolved of the blame of staying back. Only those will be absolved of this blame who though are not able to reach the battlefield because of their weakness, ailment or poverty, yet wherever they are, try as far as they can to serve Islam and the Muslims. And if they are not able to do anything, then at least in their homes they sincerely pray for the victory of Islam and the Muslims and express grief at their own deprivation of being unable to participate in *jihad*.

Although, those mentioned by the words “and they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance” are already

69. There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: “I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance,” they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. Only they are to blame who seek reprieve from you even though they are wealthy. They were satisfied to remain with those women who stay in their homes, and God sealed their hearts. Thus they became deprived of knowledge.

alluded to in verse 91, they are specially mentioned here so that their passion could be lauded. They were not ones who were hindered by poverty or by weakness of faith. On the one hand, there are people who sit back because they think that they are indigent and are without weapons, transport and provisions; thus they think that God has given them a legitimate excuse for staying back. On the other, there are those who do not want to be easily deprived of this blessed cause; they try their best to capitalize on this opportunity by finding options where these needs could be met. If they are not able to succeed in this effort, their deprivation makes them shed tears. In other words, this shows that even for the poor, the legitimate excuse is only in the case when every limb of their body evidences it.

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُونَ لَكُمْ ثُمَّ قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

The word اعتذرا here means “to make false excuses.”

The invocative in “say: do not make excuses” is singular even though the address in the first section of the verse is plural. Similarly, in the later part “we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances” the pronouns “you” and “your” are in the plural. It is evident from this, that the hypocrites are responded through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) on behalf of all the believers. It is as if the tongue of the Prophet (sws) is the representative of all sincere believers. There is complete harmony and trust between him and his followers. The sarcasm on the hypocrites is also evident in this.

It is evident from the words “we shall not believe in anything you say; God has fully informed us of your circumstances” that the real reason because of which the excuses of the hypocrites were regarded as unacceptable was that God Himself had exposed them. He knows the hidden and the apparent. Since all others except the Prophet (sws) can never be in a position to know what is hidden, they can only form an opinion on the basis of the *sharī‘ah* relying on outward circumstances. If there is no religious or intellectual basis to reject an excuse or claim, it will be accepted even it is totally baseless in reality. We shall accept every person who lays claim to faith as a Muslim if there is no religious ground to negate him even though he may be a strong hypocrite inwardly.

The remaining part of the verse implies that instead of hiding behind the shield of

70. When you people return to them, they will present excuses before you. Say: Do not make excuses; we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances. Now God and His Messenger will observe your deeds. Then you will be brought before Him who knows what is open and what is hidden, and He will inform you of all your misdeeds.

false excuses and oaths, they should bear witness to their uprightness through their deeds. God and His Messenger are observing their deeds and these baseless excuses will be of no benefit to them.

سَيَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ط فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ط إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

In this verse, a single word إعرض mentioned adjacently occurs very eloquently in two different, in fact, opposite meanings. One of its meanings is “to turn one’s face away from someone.” Another of its meanings is “to accept the excuse of a person and forgive him and be happy with him.” It is used in the second meaning at the first instance and in the first at the second.

يَخْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ ط فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

The words “they will swear in front of you to become pleased with them” explain the second meaning of إعرض referred to earlier. God will only be pleased with them when they repent and mend their affairs and make Him happy.

أَلَا عَرَبٌ أَشْدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ ط وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

This verse states why these villagers became so worthy of God’s wrath that even if they are able to please the believers, God will never be pleased with them. Neither have they been able to spend time in the company of the Prophet (sws) and the companions nor did they try to become aware of the bound and limits of God’s book. As a consequence, they were the worst affected by the onslaught of disbelief and hypocrisy. Had faith been dear to them, they would have remained in contact with the Prophet (sws) and the righteous and would have enhanced their own faith and knowledge. But they would always present the excuse of their wealth and family holding them back, as is mentioned in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Fath.

Further down in verse 122 of the current sūrah, their indifference to religion and to the centre of religion is referred to in these words: وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ط فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

71. On your return, these people will swear before you oaths by God that you forgive them. So, just ignore them. They are filth in entirety, and Hell is their abode because of their misdeeds.

72. They will swear in front of you to become pleased with them. Even if you become pleased with them, God will not be pleased with these people who break promises.

73. These villagers are stronger in their disbelief and hypocrisy and are more worthy that they be unaware of the bounds of what God has revealed to His Messenger. And God knows everything and is very wise.

74. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not

In other words, being villagers is not an excuse for them. If they belong to the villages, even then it was their responsibility to be diligent in their own education and instruction. However, on the contrary after claiming to profess Islam, they continued to nurture their disbelief and hypocrisy. Thus they were but worthy of the ignorance which nurtured in them. Since God is knowledgeable and wise, all His dealings are based on knowledge and wisdom. He does not force religion and its knowledge on anyone and gives to each what he proves worthy of.

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَكْرِضُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَابِرَ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

Since God hears and knows all, no secret is hidden from Him. Whatever He tells His creatures and in whatever way He will deal with them are based on these attributes.

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَاتٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سِوَدِ خُلُوفِ اللَّهِ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

The word قُرْبَات is the plural of قربة. It refers to those deeds of piety and charity which bring a person closer to God.

This verse mentions the sincere and the righteous among the villagers.

Earlier in verse 80, the Prophet (sws) was stopped from seeking forgiveness and in verse 84 from offering funeral prayers for the hypocrites. However, the sincere among still enjoyed these benefits. It is for this reason that it is stated that they make their charity and the Prophet's supplications to be a means of nearness to God whereas the hypocrites are deprived of both these benefits.

The pronoun in أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ is in the feminine singular, yet its antecedents are both the things mentioned earlier. Generally, our exegetes interpret this expression to mean that they make their charity to be a means of procuring the Prophet's supplication. However, I am reluctant to accept this interpretation. In order, to accept it, certain suppressions in the expression would be taken to be present for which there are no

happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

75. And among these villagers, there are those also who regard spending in the way of God to be a penalty and wait for you a turn of fortune. Let bad fortune fall on them and God hears and knows all.

76. And among them, there are those also who believe in God and in the last day and regard what they spend and the supplications of the Messenger as a means of procuring God's nearness. So, indeed, this is a means of nearness for them. God shall admit them into His mercy. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

concomitant indications. Ustādh Farāhī also hold the same view as the one I have presented. I find it to be correct both with regard to language and to the coherence of the discourse.

Section IX: (100-112)

In the succeeding verses, first those who took the initiative in accepting Islam or those who sincerely followed them are lauded. These are the real building blocks of an Islamic society. God has given them glad tidings of being pleased with them and of a great success.

After that, the hypocrites of Madīnah and the villages are referred to and they are warned of punishment in all three instances: this world, Barzakh and the next world.

Obviously, it automatically emanates from this that they have no relationship with Islam and the Islamic society.

After that, those people are mentioned which this great *sūrah* had shaken and jolted and who, as a result, became anxious to confess their sins and seek forgiveness. They were then given glad tidings of acceptance of their repentance. The Prophet (sws) was thereupon given certain directives to reform and instruct them. The acceptance of repentance of some was deferred and they were told to wait for God's decision.

After that the issue of the Darār mosque and its founders is taken up and verdict about them is delivered.

Next, the covenant between God and the believers is referred to and the qualities which they should profess as a consequence are explained. The purpose is expunge the Muslim society from unwanted elements of all types to restore it to its pristine form.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْغَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾ مِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ
أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُوا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يَرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَ
آخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ خُذْ
مِنَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ ۚ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَىٰ اللَّهُ

عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيَعْتَبُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَآخَرُونَ مُّرْجُونَ
 إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ أَمَّا يَعِدُّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَنْزُبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَازًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِصْآءًا لِّبَنِي حَارَبِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ
 ﴿١٠٢﴾ لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ۚ لَكَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ ۚ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَّطَهَّرُوا ۚ
 وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمِ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ
 هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ
 تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي
 سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۚ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ
 فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمْ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٦﴾ أَتَأْتِبُونَ الْعِبْدُونَ الْحَدِيثَ وَالسَّابِقُونَ
 الرَّكُوعُونَ السَّجِدُونَ الْأُمُورُونَ بِالْعُرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ النُّكْرِ وَالْحَفَظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

And God was pleased with those Muhājirūn and Anṣār and they were pleased with Him who took the initiative the foremost, and then with those also who befittingly followed them. And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success. (100)

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. (101)

And there are some others also who have confessed their sins. And they have earned both good and bad deeds. Hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them. God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all. Do they not know that it is God alone Who accepts the repentance of His servants and lauds their charity and that God is very inclined to accepting repentance and is Merciful? Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds. And soon you will be brought forth before Him who knows all the revealed and the concealed. He will inform you what you have been doing. (102-105)

And there are others also whose matter stands deferred until the verdict of God. He will either punish them or accept their repentance. And God knows everything. He is extremely wise. (106)

And those who have built a mosque to harm Islam, strengthen disbelief, cause a rift between the believers and to provide an ambush for people who before this have been engaged in war with God and His Messenger and they will swear: “We did this only to do good.” And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. You must never stand in it. Only that mosque is worthy that you stand in it whose foundation from the first day was based on piety. In it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity. Is that person better who based the foundation of his building on the fear of God and in pleasing Him or he who raised his building on the side of a hollow precipice that is about to fall; thus it fell with him in Hell? And God shall not guide the unjust. And this building which they have built will be rooted in their hearts on the basis of doubt except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise. (107-110)

Indeed, God has bought the persons and wealth of the believers in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of God; thus they slay and are slain. This is a true promise incumbent upon God in the Torah, in the Gospel and in the Qur’ān. And who can be truer in fulfilling his promise than God? So, rejoice on your deal that you have made with God. And this in reality is supreme success. Those who continue to repent, worship, are grateful, who strive, kneel and prostrate, enjoin good and forbid evil and protect the bounds of God are the true believers and give glad tidings to the believers. (111-112)

Explanation

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْمُهْجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ⁷⁷

This verse mentions the real asset and treasure of an Islamic society. One purpose for this is to present them as an example for all the Muslims so that they should strive to follow them. The second purpose is to make evident to the hypocrites that they should now not try to remain part of this noble group. If they want to remain part of it, then they should adopt their ways otherwise get ready to meet their fate.

The verse lauds that vanguard of the Muslim community from among the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*; they were the ones who took the initiative to accept faith; it was a time when even one step towards it meant coming in harms way. Supporting the Prophet (sws) meant that they had taken on the might of all Arabia.

Those who occupy the second place after them though did respond to the call of the Prophet (sws) immediately, yet they followed in the footsteps of the first group with

77. And God was pleased with those Muhājirūn and Anṣār and they were pleased with Him who took the initiative the foremost, and then with those also who befittingly followed them. And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success.

full sincerity and uprightness. In this regard, they did not let any pretension, expediency and vested-interest creep into them. Similarly, they were without any reluctance and hypocrisy. Once on their way, they did not think of turning back. They severed themselves from all those worthy of it and connected themselves to all those worthy of it. In fact, such was this union that the two became one. This sincerity, veracity and complete harmony between their inner and outerselves has been called *ihsān* here. At another instance in this exegesis it has been explained that *ihsān* means to do something in a thorough and befitting way. The verse states that God was pleased with them and they were pleased with God. God was pleased with them because they went to the ultimate extent in showing the patience, perseverance, valour and selflessness He expected from people for the cause of the truth. Similarly, they fully abided by the covenant they made with God in spite of all the hardships and opposition they had to encounter. Furthermore they perfected their abilities and potentials that God had placed in them and expended them in pleasing God alone. They never let Satan creep into this sincerity to God.

The meaning of they being pleased with God is that they regarded every dealing of God with them to be based on His justice, wisdom and mercy in every sense. If they faced some trial, they regarded it to be a remedy to some shortcoming they had. If they were confronted with a hardship, they regarded it to be a test of their patience and steadfastness. If good times befell them, they showed gratitude and if they were afflicted with sorrow, they showed perseverance and satisfaction. They never lost hope in any situation. Storms erupted, thunder lit up the heavens and lightning even struck their belongings to reduce them to ashes; yet nothing could disrupt their satisfied souls. They remain pleased with God and God remained pleased with them and this ultimately made them worthy of the glad tidings: (۳۰-۲۹:۸۹) *وَادْخُلْ جَنَّاتٍ* (enter among My servants and enter My Paradise, (89: 29-30)).

Consider next the portion: “And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success.” This is the reward they will reap for being pleased with God.

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُّوا عَلَى النَّفَاقِ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ۚ

This verse earmarks the hypocrites. It is merely to achieve their own objectives that they have entered the Muslim faction. So adept are they in their hypocrisy that it is difficult for the Muslims to recognize them. Their hypocrisy is well grounded in them

78. 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.

and they are Muslims outwardly only. This pretentiousness seems so real that they have been successful in deceiving the Muslims.

The words “you do not know them; We know them” admonish both the Muslims and these hypocrites. The former are warned to be very careful and cautious about these wolves in the garb of sheep and to be very vigilant; not every one can recognize their double-face. The latter are warned that however much they may change their garb, others can be deceived in recognizing them; but not God. He fully knows them and will make them reach their evil fate.

The words “We shall punish them twice” refer to the punishment they will receive at the hands of the Muslims as well as to the one they will encounter in Barzakh.

The fates of the believers and the hypocrites will be contrasting. Earlier it was said that the believers will achieve great success. Now it is said that for the hypocrites there is a painful punishment in the hereafter.

وَاٰخِرُونَ اغْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرًا سَيِّئًا ۚ عَسَىٰ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ اِنَّ صَلٰتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ ۚ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَقُلِ اَعْمَلُوا فَاَسِيْرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرِسُوْلُهُ ۚ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾⁷⁹

These verses mention weak Muslims and those who had shown weakness in the battle of Tabūk; however, they still had the spark of faith left in them. When this *sūrah* jolted and shook the hypocrites and these weak Muslims came to know about them, their eyes were opened. Instead of making excuses, they confessed their mistake and very anxiously consigned themselves to God and His Messenger. It is mentioned in historical reports that some of them even tied themselves with the columns of the Prophet’s mosque and vowed not to eat or drink or leave that place unless they are forgiven by them. At times, God likes the shame and worry for repentance shown by a person more than his pious deeds. Thus God was pleased with their acknowledgement of sin and as is evident from the words “hopefully, God will bestow His favour on

79. And there are some others also who have confessed their sins. And they have earned both good and bad deeds. Hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them. God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all. Do they not know that it is God alone Who accepts the repentance of His servants and lauds their charity and that God is very inclined to accepting repentance and is Merciful? Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds. And soon you will be brought forth before Him who knows all the revealed and the concealed. He will inform you what you have been doing.

them” they were given the hope that their repentance will be accepted.

The potency of the Qur’ānic words when it was revealed and their influence now can be clearly seen. The Qur’ān is the same and the worst forms of hypocrisy are present in us; however, hearts are no longer the same; no longer do they get influenced by what the Qur’an enjoins. Today we may find people who prefer to protest by remaining empty stomach in order to get a pay raise; but seldom will we find those who can stay up even one night to lament their sins.

The words “and they have earned both good and bad deeds” express what became a recommendation in their favour. It is stated that these people were not merely raised in hypocrisy; in fact, with vices, they also earned virtues. They did stumble while treading the path of piety; but not in the manner that they did not get up after falling down; they kept on rising after every fall. It was this behaviour which became the reason for their repentance and confession of sins. Hence they are not worthy of being shown indifference to; in fact, they deserve God’s favour and affection.

The words “hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them” give glad tidings of acceptance of mercy and of acceptance of their repentance; however, the style does not reflect certitude. The word “hopefully” shows that these glad tidings were conditional. Thus the words “tell them: carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds” of verse 105 points to this condition too. It is evident from this that though these people were forgiven but on the condition that they align all their future deeds with the pleasure of God, His Messenger and the believers. It shows that they will still remain under observation until they fully prove themselves of being trustworthy through their deeds.

Consider now the verse: “Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all.” It has become fully evident from verses 53-54 that by this phase the Prophet (sws) had been asked to ignore the charity of the hypocrites. Thus he would even reject some charity. Similarly, in verse 84, he had been stopped to supplicate and seek forgiveness for them. However, those who had been forgiven among them became an exception to this prohibition and they were granted both these blessings

In the expression *حُذِّ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ* two words: *tazkiyah* and *tathīr* are mentioned. Their usage in the Qur’ān shows that the latter is mostly used to cleanse the apparent and hidden filth in a person and the former adds to this meaning another aspect: to develop and nurture abilities and to adorn one’s self with the virtues of morality.

One thing evident from the above expression is that the most effective remedy to the ailment of hypocrisy is spending in the way of God. The source of this ailment primarily is love of this world and it is this love that produces all those vices that can be comprehensively called hypocrisy. Spending in the way of God uproots this ailment. When it is uprooted, then on the one hand, vices become weak and on the

other, virtues begin to be nurtured.

The second thing that is evident from this expression is that those who spend in the way of God do not do any favour to God and His Messenger. The real favour is actually shown to them by God and His Messenger by accepting this charity. This is because the cleansing and purity it produces in a person is not needed by God and His Messenger; it is needed by those who are invited to spend their charity.

The expression صَلَّ عَلَيْهِمْ includes the funeral prayer besides general prayers and supplications. These forgiven people are allowed funeral prayers that had been forbidden for the hypocrites in verse 84.

The words “and God hears and knows all” sound assurance as well as warning.

Verse 103 addressed the Prophet (sws) and he was told that when these people have confessed their sins, he should once again train and instruct them; at the same time, he was guided to what could be the most effective way to train and instruct them. In verse 104, these people are directly urged and exhorted to seek repentance and spend in charity because God accepts repentance and charity and His attributes testify to this. Thus those who want to please God and procure His nearness should do these deeds held dear by God as much as possible. Also evident from this is that repentance and reforming one’s self is not a temporary task; it needs perpetuity.

Consider the words “Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds.” They are meant to warn and admonish them.

80.  وَأَخْرُؤْنَ مَرْجُونَ لِمَ اللَّهِ إِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

The word إرجاء means “to postpone or cancel a matter.”

There were some people who had sincerely repented for their sins but they had not been forgiven at that time and their matter had been deferred. In verse 118 ahead, they are referred to. From there it is evident that they were three people. Narratives mention their names as Ka’b ibn Mālik, Hilāl ibn Umayyah and Murārah ibn al-Rabī’. These individuals were not incriminated with hypocrisy. In fact, they had made sacrifices for Islam and even participated in all previous wars. However, at the instance of the Tabūk campaign, they showed weakness. For certain reasons to be referred to later, they were sternly punished than the rest. The attributes of God at the end of the verse imply that these people will be dealt with by God on the basis of His wisdom and knowledge.

A question arises here regarding the harshness shown to them, particularly when they had a flawless past. In my opinion, this can have several reasons.

The first reason could be that the anger shown to someone is commensurate with the trust and good-will that person has. If others had made mistakes, it was not something

80. And there are others also whose matter stands deferred until the verdict of God. He will either punish them or accept their repentance. And God knows everything. He is extremely wise.

unexpected because of their weaknesses; however, the blemish committed by these three not only tarnished their flawless past but also damaged the trust and good-will the Prophet (sws) had in and for them.

The second reason could be that they did not fully realize their mistake because of the stature they had earned for what they had done for the cause of religion already. Thus the succeeding verse refers to it. Dilution in the feeling of shame for a mistake is against the real spirit of repentance. Thus, in order to train and instruct them, their repentance was deferred until the anxiety, worry and restlessness needed for the acceptance of forgiveness was stirred in them.

The third reason could be to strike a final blow on the hypocritical mentality, as I have referred to earlier. God preferred that the emotions against hypocrisy should awaken in the believers so much that they do not tolerate any of its type among them. For this purpose, stern accountability from those who, before their mistake, professed an unblemished character would have been the most effective. This incident must have also opened the eyes of the hypocrites. They would have realized that when such people could be punished what to speak of others. Other believers too must have understood the real criteria in religion on which every person must be prepared to be judged.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَازًا وَكُفَرًا وَتَفَرِّقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِصَْادًا لِّبَن حَارَبِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَكَيْخِلْفَن
 إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَى ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ۚ لَمَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ
 أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ ۖ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

This is a mention of the most mischievous faction of the hypocrites. There were two mosques already present in Madīnah. One of them was the Qubā mosque situated in the suburbs and other was the Prophet's mosque located in the city. However, to carry out their malicious motives, they built another mosque. It was built to provide them with a den to hatch conspiracies against Islam and the Muslims. They named it as a mosque to falsely impress the Prophet (sws) and the believers with their religiosity and at the same time achieve their purpose. In order to make it popular, they even tried to make the Prophet (sws) pray in it once so that it too earns the same sanctity in the eyes of people as that of the Qubā mosque. However, the Prophet (sws) fully understood their motives and tried to put them off. But, when these verses were revealed, he not only did not pray in it, he also had it razed to ground upon his return

81. And those who have built a mosque to harm Islam, strengthen disbelief, cause a rift between the believers and to provide an ambush for people who before this have been engaged in war with God and His Messenger and they will swear: "We did this only to do good." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. You must never stand in it. Only that mosque is worthy that you stand in it whose foundation from the first day was based on piety. In it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity.

from Tabūk.

These verses expose the evil motives for which this alleged mosque was built.

The first of these motives was that it was built to harm Islam and the believers. A mosque is a place of prayer and religious rituals. But this was a trap laid out to attract the believers and then gradually inject the poison of hypocrisy in them.

The second motive was disbelief. In other words, to nurture and nourish the disbelief that had found its way in them. A mosque is a workshop of faith but this alleged mosque was meant to serve disbelief.

The third motive was to create rift and dissension between Muslims. In Islam, it is the mosque which binds people and organizes them as a unit. These hypocrites wanted to first attract them to a mosque and then cause disruption in their ranks.

The fourth motive was to provide a place in which they could lie in ambush. It has been referred to earlier that all these hypocrites had their sympathies with factions warring against Islam. They desired them to succeed and were actually their agents among the Muslims. At this instance, they thought of building a mosque to hide their subversive activities and to also provide a den for themselves to carry out their evil motives.

The Prophet (sws) was then told that these hypocrites would repeatedly swear that their intentions in building this mosque were based on sincerity. They would contend that it was built for the benefit and use of the believers; they wanted to increase worship places so that people who could not go to the Qubā mosque in the dark of night or in cold weather or in rain would be not deprived of the reward of congregational prayers.

The expression **وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ** connotes swearing an oath.

An ambiguity in this verse is that the *khabar* (enunciative) is not mentioned in it. Exegetes have generally interpreted it to mean these hypocrites who made this mosque are from among the hypocrites that have mentioned earlier. However, this interpretation only solves the coordination of this verse with the previous one; the issue of the enunciative still remains. In my opinion, the enunciative is suppressed here. It is known that in the Arabic language at instances of intense anger the enunciative is suppressed. It is as if the furious tone of the speaker is a substitute for the enunciative.

The hypocrites did not succeed in bringing forth the Prophet (sws) to pray in this mosque and hence their nefarious designs never succeeded. He was stopped in standing in it. The sternness found in the tone in “you must never stand in it” is directed to the hypocrites and not the Prophet (sws).

In “whose foundation from the first day was based on piety” the reference is to the Qubā mosque because the Darār mosque had been built to counter it. The hypocrites wanted to undo the status of this mosque but the Almighty made it an abiding place by praising it and those who offered prayers in it. The words used are “in it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity.” This praise is also a slant on the

mischief-mongers of the Ḍarār mosque. In other words, they are ones whose both inner and outer selves are impure. Since they are worthy of God's wrath, the Prophet (sws) should have no link with this alleged mosque.

It may be noted that the superlative in the Arabic language and in the Qur'ān is also used without any comparison. Same is the case here in: أَحَقُّ.

It is also evident from this verse that the real foundations of a mosque are laid in the hearts of people who build it and not on the land. If its founders have piety in their hearts and they base the foundations of the mosque on piety as well, then it is worthy of being called a mosque. If hearts have mischief in them, then such a place cannot be called a mosque; it is a place of idol-worship which will lead its founders and worshippers to Hell one day, as will be evident from the next verse.

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ٨٢

The word شَفَا refers to the edge or side of something.

In rivers, canals and valleys, sometimes the force of water takes away with itself mud that lies below the edges. This hollow and unstable precipice is called جرف.

The expression هَارٍ الْبِنَاء means a building is about to fall after being rent apart. The *ism al-fā'il* from this verb is هَائِر and هَارٍ. It is the same as شَاكَ السَّلَام and شَانَكَ السَّلَام, both of which are *ism al-fā'ils*.

This verse depicts a parable of those who base their deeds on some evil motive instead of basing them on piety and pleasing God.

The guidance referred to in the last part is with reference to the purpose and consequence.

لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ٨٣

The verse employs the literary instrument of *ta'līq bi al-muḥāl*, which means expressing the impossibility of something happening. It is evident from this that every deed has different effects. In general, all deeds done because of hypocrisy have poisonous effects but it becomes impossible to sever one's self from the consequences of a deed as building the Ḍarār mosque. It is like blood flowing in body.

82. Is that person better who based the foundation of his building on the fear of God and in pleasing Him or he who raised his building on the side of a hollow precipice that is about to fall; thus it fell with him in Hell? And God shall not guide the unjust.

83. And this building which they have built will be rooted in their hearts on the basis of doubt except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقٌّ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبِشِرُوا بِهِ إِنَّكُمْ الَّذِينَ بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ⁸⁴ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

This verse explains the essence of the pledge sworn on the hands of the Prophet (sws) in which every believer acknowledges that there is no god by God and that Muhammad is His messenger. The purpose is delineate the consequences of this pledge so that every person can decide for himself the right course and the wrong one that is based on hypocrisy and disbelief.

The greatest status that human beings enjoy is that in spite of being God's creatures they have entered into a contract of sale and purchase with their creator. In accordance with this contract, God Himself takes a certain responsibility on Himself just as He imposes certain responsibilities on them. It is obvious that this stature of human beings is because God has given them the choice of free-will in certain spheres and desired that human beings out of their own willingness let God have a right in their wealth and persons and then earn the eternal abode of Paradise because of it.

Here is how this contract is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy: 6:4-5)

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew, 19:29)

In the Gospel the words "Kingdom of Heaven" are used for Paradise. The translators of the Torah changed all rewards of the hereafter to rewards of this world because of their greed for this world. However, in the teachings of the prophets, there is a copious mention of eternal rewards given in an eternal life.

The verse urges the believers to consign to God what they have pledged and be prepared to receive what God has pledged to them. Grand is God's Paradise. It is not an unprofitable deal. It is eternal life in exchange of a few days of this worldly life.

الَّذِينَ يَبِئُونَ الْعِبَادُونَ الْحَبْدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرُّكُوعُونَ السَّجْدُونَ الْأُمُورُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْخَفِظُونَ

84. Indeed, God has bought the persons and wealth of the believers in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of God; thus they slay and are slain. This is a true promise incumbent upon God in the Torah, in the Gospel and in the Qur'ān. And who can be truer in fulfilling his promise than God? So, rejoice on your deal that you have made with God. And this in reality is supreme success.

لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ⁸⁵

Just as in the previous verse, the enunciative (*khavar*) was suppressed, in this verse too it is suppressed. Al-Zujāj also hold this opinion and I regard it to be strongly grounded. On certain occasions, the stress in a sentence points to the enunciative even though it is not expressed in words. Here, exactly same is the case. The occasion shows that those who have these traits are true believers and the Prophet (sws) should give glad tidings to such believers.

All the words that occur in this verse have been explained at different instances in this exegesis except the word السَّائِرُونَ. I did face a lot of difficulty in translating it. Its conventional meaning is “to walk about in the land.” It is used precisely in this meaning in verse 2 of this very *sūrah* thus: فَسَيُخَوِّفُنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ.⁸⁶ However, the context of this verse clearly shows that its literal meaning is not implied here. It occurs as a term. The word سياحت (*siyāḥah*) is a term of religious people since ancient times and it is translated by Ibn Manẓūt thus: الذهاب في الأرض للعبادة والترهب (to go to some place for the purpose of worship and for striving for the cause of religion).⁸⁷ Before the advent of Islam, a special importance with regard to worship was given to a person leaving his wife and children and the humdrum of life and seeking refuge in forest, deserts and isolated places. The purpose was to use all his time to meditate, worship and do various religiously motivated exercises. At the same time, the person was required to eat only as much as was needed to survive. He was to live on wild fruits and fountains found at these places. This has been the most liked way of worship among Christian and Buddhist monks and Hindu Yogis. If these people would meet people, it was more on the pattern of nomadic expeditions, moving from place to another. They would urge people to piety and virtue wherever they would temporarily stay and then move on to another place. It was to such a life of asceticism that the word سياحت was used as a term.

The extent of this سياحت which was part of monasticism has been prohibited in Islam because it is a religion based on human nature and monasticism is against human nature. The part of it that relates to trusting God, remembering Him, devoting one's self to Him, exerting one's self to find the truth, seeking knowledge, disseminating religion and striving for the cause of religion is also desirable in Islam. These have been made parts of the fast, the *i'tikāf*, *'umrah*, *hajj* and *jihād* by it. For this reason, it contains both positive and negative things about سياحت. On the one

85. Those who continue to repent, worship, are grateful, who strive, kneel and prostrate, enjoin good and forbid evil and protect the bounds of God are the true believers and give glad tidings to the believers.

86. So, walk about now in this land for four months.

87. Ibn Manẓūt, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 2, 492.

hand, it is stated: لا سياحة في الإسلام (there is no *siyāḥah* in Islam)⁸⁸ and on the other, it is said: سياحة هذه الأمة الصيام ولزوم المساجد (the *siyāḥah* of this *ummah* is its adherence to the fast and to mosques).⁸⁹ It is narrated by Abū Dā'ūd that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and sought permission to participate in *jihād*. At this, he is said to have replied: سياحة أمتي الجهاد في سبيل الله (The *siyāḥah* of my *ummah* is waging *jihād* for the cause of God).⁹⁰ It is evident from these details that the real objective of *siyāḥah* is found in Islam as well. Thus, the fast, *i'tikāf*, *hijrah*, *jihād* and traveling for preaching and gaining knowledge are included in its meaning. Just as this *siyāḥah* is for men, it is also for women, which is evident from the word سائحات. However, women would be exempted in these practices where Islam has exempted them. For example, participating in war.

Our exegetes have generally translated the word *siyāḥah* as “those who fast” or “those who move about for the cause of God” or “those show disinterest in worldly affairs.” However, these translations only bring forth one aspect of this word. The translation “to strive” which I have adopted may not do full justice to the word and I am also not fully satisfied with it, but I do think that it is closer to its essence and covers not all but most of its meanings.

In the earlier verse, the essence of making a pledge with religion was depicted. Now in this verse, the real character of the believers is being highlighted. The purpose is place a mirror in front of the hypocrites so that if they want they can reform themselves by looking into it.

Of the various components of the character of believers that are mentioned here, the first one is penitence. It means “turning to God.” The first step that a person should do in worshipping and obeying God is that instead of wandering about in satanic ways he turns to his Lord and shows determination in treading the straight path. It is this penitence that gets hold of him in every task. Whenever he deviates from the straight path, it is penitence that comes to his rescue and sets him back on the straight path.

After penitence, worship is mentioned. It is the greatest right of God imposed on the person who turns towards God. And since there is no one else except God Who has this right, hence no one else should have a share in this worship nor in obedience because obedience is a natural requisite of worship.

After worship, gratitude is mentioned because it is the essence of all forms of worship. This is precisely why rituals like the prayer and the *zakāh* are manifestations of gratitude to God and an acknowledgement of His favours. If the sentiments of gratitude and acknowledgement of favours are not deeply engendered in a person, he is not able to befittingly worship God nor is His worship braced with its true spirit.

88. Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Jawzī, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1405 AH), 512.

89. Ibn Manẓū, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 2, 493.

90. Abu Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 5, (no, 2486).

After this, *siyāḥah* is mentioned. It has already been explained above. It is a comprehensive expression of all efforts, exercises and struggles which a person undertakes to reform his inner and outer self, to understand and teach religion and to disseminate and spread it with fervour and altruism and for whose cause he sacrifices the pleasures and comforts of his life without any hesitation.

After that, the prayer is mentioned. The expression used to refer to it is الرُّكُوعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ. Wherever the prayer is mentioned in this manner in the Qur'ān, it does not merely refer to the obligatory prayer. It also alludes to the ones offered in seclusion. It is these prayers which protect all the attributes mentioned earlier and it is they who enliven and nurture the exertion for the cause of God called *sayāḥah* by the Qur'ān.

After this, forbidding from evil and urging towards virtue is mentioned. The attributes stated earlier refer to individual reform. Now the collective conduct of people is clarified: they enjoin virtue and forbid vice. They are not unconcerned with the right and wrong of others and in fact have great concern in them to reform others, and according to their capacity try to set right wrongs.

At the end, the bounds of God are mentioned. This in fact is an expression of piety. This is a reference to an attribute which is the most comprehensive: in other words, these people remain very vigilant in every phase of life to abide by the bounds set by God and not to cross them. Neither do they themselves dare to break any limit nor, as far as they are can, permit others to do so.

As pointed out earlier, the reason that these traits of the believers are mentioned here is that the picture of true believers comes before the hypocrites: it is such people who have these traits and not every claimant to faith whose character and deeds are the entire opposite but they want their names to be written in the register of the believers.

Section X: (113-129)

This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. Muslims are directly addressed in it. After cleansing their faction from all evil elements, here at the end they are being given some directives and glad tidings.

It is first said that it is not befitting for the Prophet (sws) or the believers to seek forgiveness from God for the idolaters, even if they are blood relatives. In this regard, the nature of the forgiveness sought by Abraham (sws) for his father is clarified so that it may not create any misconception. The purpose of this directive is to cleanse the believers from every speck of evil and prepare them to live and die for the mission of the truth only. If some other inclination than the truth enters a person even to a miniscule extent, it opens the door to hypocrisy and disbelief. For this reason, this door has been tightly shut.

After this, all the believers are given glad tidings of acceptance of their repentance, who, after the warnings mentioned in the *sūrah*, were anxious to rectify their

weaknesses and were diligently seeking forgiveness for them.

After this, the repenters of the people of Madīnah and the Bedouins are urged to always remain in the company of the truthful and the sincere. Their company will be an antidote to their weaknesses. Moreover, they should bear in mind the great favour which God has promised to reward them with in exchange of every small and big virtue done for His cause. Further, the factions living in the deserts are advised to remain associated with the centre so that they can reap the blessings of the Prophet's company and also disseminate them to their own people.

Further ahead, the believers are told to wage war with the disbelievers around them and be stern with them. The fate of those who were still deeply involved in hypocrisy after all these warnings is indicated.

At the end, the believers are addressed and told how great a mercy and favour is the person of the Prophet (sws). They should sincerely value him. Those who evade this advice are told through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he does not care for anyone as God is sufficient for him; he has full trust in Him and He is the owner of the glorious throne.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلنَّاسِ كَيْفَ لَهُمْ مَا تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَبَّى تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَا يَتَّقُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّى إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْبَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَطْئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ

الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ يَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۚ وَاعْلَبُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ إِيمَانًا ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَىٰ رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ هَلْ يَرِيكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انصَرَفُوا ۚ صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۚ بَأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٨﴾

It is not befitting for the Prophet and the believers to pray for the forgiveness of the Idolaters, even if they are their relatives when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell. And Abraham had asked for the forgiveness of his father only because of the promise he had made with him. Then when it became evident to him that he is God's enemy, he declared his acquittal from him. Indeed, Abraham was very kind-hearted and gracious. And this is not God's practice that He lead astray a nation after guiding it until He clearly inform them of what they must refrain from. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things. It is God whose kingdom prevails in the heavens and the earth. Only He gives life and He alone gives death and except for God you neither have a friend nor a helper. (113-116)

God showed affection to the Prophet and to those among the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn who sided with the Prophet in times of difficulty after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation. Then God looked at them with affection. Indeed, He is very Affectionate, Ever-Merciful. And, He looked with affection on the three also whose matter had been deferred. Until when the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness and their souls suffered affliction and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him. Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful. (117-118)

Believers! Keep fearing God and be in the company of the truthful. It was not befitting for the Bedouins of Madīnah and those who lived nearby that they sit behind

leaving God and His Messenger. Neither was it befitting for them to regard their own life to be dearer than his. This is because whatever thirst, fatigue and hunger they are afflicted with in the cause of God and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers and injury on an enemy, in exchange for all these one pious deed is written for them. God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough. And whatever small or large amount they spend in charity and whatever valley they traverse, all is written down for them so that God can best reward them for their deeds. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful? (119-122)

Believers! wage war against the disbelievers around you and let them find sternness in you. And you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits. And when a *sūrah* is revealed, there are some among them also who ask: “Whose faith among you has it increased?” So, those who have actually believed, it increases their faith and they receive glad tidings from it. As for those whose hearts have an ailment, it increases their filth with another filth and they die as disbelievers. Do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice? Even then, they do not repent or take heed? And when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: “Is there anyone watching?” Then they slip away. God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand. (123-127)

There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. It weighs down heavily on him if you suffer. He is desirous of your faith and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers. Thus if they turn away, say: God is sufficient for me. There is no deity except Him. I have trusted Him alone and He is the Lord of the glorious throne. (128-129)

Explanation

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولِي قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَ
مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ
حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾⁹¹

In the first verse, the believers are asked to refrain from a very hidden form of

91. It is not befitting for the Prophet and the believers to pray for the forgiveness of the Idolaters, even if they are their relatives when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell. And Abraham had asked for the forgiveness of his father only because of the promise he had made with him. Then when it became evident to him that he is God's enemy, he declared his acquittal from him. Indeed, Abraham was very kind-hearted and gracious.

polytheism, which actually leads to hypocrisy through the back door: they should not pray for the forgiveness of those from whom the declaration of acquittal had been made after the truth had been conclusively communicated to them and even then did not accept faith. The reason for this is that such adversaries have become worthy of God's wrath. Praying for them because of being related or because of any other form of association would mean that one's affiliation with blood relationship has prevailed over one's affiliation with the truth. Here the word "idolaters" refers to the "idolaters of Arabia" from whom acquittal has been sounded in very blatant words at the beginning of the *sūrah* from God and His Messenger. A great weakness of the hypocrites was that they were not willing to sever ties of relationship and friendship from such idolaters. After severing all links with them, the believers were told that forgiveness should also not be sought for them. Earlier on, this same directive was given to the Prophet (sws) regarding die-hard hypocrites: he should neither seek God's forgiveness for them nor lead their funeral prayers. In the lives of God's Messengers, there comes a stage when they and the believers are stopped from even praying for the guidance and forgiveness of the disbelievers. In fact, a stage is also reached when words like ⁹²لَا تَدْرُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا are uttered by them. This is the time when God does not want the slightest of evil to remain attached to the believers so that they are protected from the punishment that is ordained for such evil elements. I have explained in *Sūrah al-Anfāl* that the prayers of a prophet and the believers provide security for their nation. Here by stopping the Prophet (sws) and the believers from these prayers, the idolaters have lost their last barrier of protection.

It is evident from the words "even if they are their relatives" any relationship of a person with the Prophet (sws) which is devoid of faith will not be of any benefit before God, let alone other ties and links.

It becomes evident from the words "when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell" that for those about whom it is evident that they will end up in Hell, it is not permissible for the believers to pray for their forgiveness. However, this does not mean that praying for the guidance of a disbeliever has also been prohibited because God Himself has informed about the idolaters mentioned in this verse ending up in Hell. After the passing away of the last prophet, there is no certain way of finding out this information about any person that he will not accept guidance and thus end up in Hell. Thus there is nothing wrong in praying for the guidance of such people. However, if a person dies as a disbeliever, forgiveness should not be sought for him. This is because doing so would render faith as insignificant and negate God's law of justice, abstaining from which is essential for the believers.

The verse clarifies a misconception arising from Abraham's prayer of supplication

92. "O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land."

for his father who was a disbeliever: he only fulfilled a promise he had made with father. Moreover, this promise was made at the time when Abraham (sws) was not fully informed that his father was in fact God's enemy. As soon as he came to know of it, he announced his acquittal from him. It is evident from concomitant indications that it was God Himself Who informed Abraham (sws) of this once he had conclusively communicated the truth to him. God told him to leave his father to himself because he is not going to accept faith.

Abraham's promise referred to here is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah Maryam, the words are: ⁹³قَالَ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيظًا

This shows the utmost importance promises have. If a person makes a promise with someone, he must fulfil it as far as it is possible.

The word *أَوَّاهٌ* means someone who is very sympathetic and caring and *حَلِيمٌ* means gracious and benevolent. Here these words praise Abraham (sws). The Almighty has expressed His likeness for his concern for his father. If the preceding and succeeding verses of the Sūrah Maryam verse quoted earlier are read, it is evident that at that time, Abraham, his father had been very callous to him. However, the obedient son not only bore the anger of his father but very affectionately promised him to pray for his forgiveness. One can deliberate how tough the declaration of acquittal must have been for such a loving son. However, since for the sake of His love, God wants a person to be both hard and soft, Abraham (sws) highlighted both these aspects of his heart. This is the right example for all exponents of religion. Unless they are affectionate and kind, there is no use for them to undertake this task. Similarly, if they do not have an iron will and immense perseverance, they will not achieve anything.

⁹⁴وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَا يَتَّقُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

This verse can refer to the established practice of God that is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān that He leads astray people only after the truth has been conclusively communicated and made fully evident to them; hence such people do not deserve such sympathy. However, because of the words "after guiding it" my mind is very inclined to think that this verse is actually a warning to the believers: after the straight path has been evident to them, God has also made evident the dangers that travellers of this path may encounter; it is now their obligation to remain secure from them; if they do not, then the responsibility of going astray rests on them. God leaves such people to go astray. In other words, this directive further emphasizes the directive as per which the believers must not pray for the forgiveness of the idolaters. It has been explained

93. Abraham said: "Peace be to you. I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. He is very Merciful to me."

94. And this is not God's practice that He lead astray a nation after guiding it until He clearly inform them of what they must refrain from. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things.

earlier that any mental or spiritual attachment with those whose enmity with the truth is evident at times becomes a trial for a person. This attachment gradually increases so much that basic beliefs are forgotten and the blood and family relations prevail on them. Today those who in spite of being born Muslims raise the slogan “we are the progeny of the pharaohs” or feel proud of Rājā Dāhir instead of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim have succumbed to this trial.

The words “indeed, God has knowledge of all things” are part of this warning. They imply that God is aware of the outer and inner aspects of a person. Any inclination towards polytheism or disbelief will not remain hidden from Him.

95 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُعْطِي وَيُيَسِّتُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٩٥﴾

This verse reflects monotheism and emphasizes what is said earlier. This purpose of this emphasis after emphasis is to cleanse even the smallest speck of polytheism from the believers.

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩٦﴾

The word تَابَ means “to turn to God.” However, when it is ascribed to God and is followed by the preposition عَلَى, its meaning encompasses mercy. Thus it would mean to look at someone with mercy or affection. The obvious consequence of this meaning is that God will accept the repentance of such a person.

This verse is proclaiming general glad tidings for those who mended their ways after hearing the warnings found in this *sūrah* and as such made themselves worthy of them. It has been pointed out earlier that this *sūrah* acted like a sieve to sift out the right elements from the evil ones in the society of those times. After this cleansing, all evil elements were expelled. Only they remained who were as pure as gold. Once God announced this general acceptance of repentance, if the heart of any person got contaminated temporarily with some sin, it was immediately washed away by the tears of his shame. God gave such people glad tidings of the acceptance of their repentance.

The first person mentioned in this list is Prophet Muḥammad (sws). This is because he was the most outstanding person of this pure society. If he is mentioned in this

95. It is God whose kingdom prevails in the heavens and the earth. Only He gives life and He alone gives death and except for God you neither have a friend nor a helper.

96. God showed affection to the Prophet and to those among the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn who sided with the Prophet in times of difficulty after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation. Then God looked at them with affection. Indeed, He is very Affectionate, Ever-Merciful.

context, it does not mean that he was guilty of a mistake the way some others were. In fact, it actually refers to his mercy and magnanimity because of which he would forgive the hypocrites for their pranks. Verses like verse 43 of this *sūrah* point to this.⁹⁷ However, since prophets of God are a benchmark of truth and justice, God checks them on such blemishes and reforms them. These blemishes originate from the sentiments of well-wishing, but cross the bounds prescribed by God for his prophets and messengers.

In the second position the *muhājirūn* and then the *anṣār* are mentioned. On the one hand, this signifies the rank and position found in an Islamic society: after the Prophet (sws) come the *muhājirūn* and then the *anṣār*. On the other hand, what is evident is the basis of this status and position: it is not lineage or tribe or wealth or status; its basis is obedience to the Prophet (sws) and service to religion. Those who are the most prominent with regard to this trait have the highest rank in an Islamic society regardless of their family and tribe and worldly assets.

The expression “in times of difficulty” primarily refers to the campaign of Tabūk. It is evident from history that it took place in very difficult circumstances. However, it also comprehensively refers to all those difficulties which the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* continued to encounter from the beginning right upto those times. This expression firstly delineates the fact that real faith is that of those who have succeeded in the trials of hardship. The second thing which is evident is that this attribute of the faith of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* made them worthy of God’s affection and He accepted their repentance. God does not deprive His sincere and selfless servants from the urge to do good. When some weakness emanates from them, God instils in them the urge to repent after which they repent and God forgives them. God disregards only those who make claims with their tongues only but are not prepared to face any adversity.

The words “after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation” show that the vast majority of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* persevered on the truth in spite of all forms of hardships they were inflicted with. Only a small number of them showed weakness at the instance of Tabūk; they too after warning reformed themselves. Then they turned to God and their repentance was accepted by Him.

وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ۖ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۙ

⁹⁸ ﴿٣٧﴾

97. “May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also.”

98. And, He looked with affection on the three also whose matter had been deferred. Until when

After glad tidings of general acceptance of repentance mentioned earlier, the case of three people deferred in verse 106, is now taken up.

The words “until when the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness” refer to the hardships these three faced. It is evident from historical reports that for fifty days these three were totally ignored by others; even their close relatives became distant, as they left these three to themselves. Their wives and children too became estranged from them. This happened while the city of Madīnah still bustled with activity; its blessings were still the same and the mutual love and affection which people had was as exemplary as ever. However, these three individuals had no one who sympathized or cared for them because they were condemned in the eyes of God and His Messenger. Vast is God’s earth for people provided they have magnanimity in their hearts. Yet when the doors of hearts close, this vastness is constricted and becomes a prison for a person. Such was the ordeal these three faced during this time. As mentioned earlier, this situation did not prevail for a few days; it went on for a whole fifty days.

Besides the constriction these people found in the external world, their inner selves too became choked and suffocated. At times, however much stagnation and compression may be found in the outer world, if a person’s heart is satisfied with his practices, the dreary outer world does not make him lose hope. He is able to find some place of refuge in his inner self. However, these people could not even show any patience for an instant in the wake of displeasure from God and His Messenger, let alone fifty days. What more can be sorrowful for people of faith than this? Such was their situation that they were more sick of their inner world than the outer one. Imagine the plight of those who do not have any hope in the world around them and their hearts too would not accept any assurance to appease them.

The words “and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him” precisely portray their inner feelings. The intensity with which these people were taken to task, with the same intensity did these people show urgency to turn to God thinking that when God is seizing them, they can only seek His refuge to save themselves. Thus it is evident from historical narratives that two of these three totally isolated themselves in seclusion. Day and night they would cry and plead and express shame and repentance. The third would at times go out but only because he might earn the affection of God and His Messenger. Had these people any germ of hypocrisy in them, they would have sought the refuge of someone when they had been discarded by God and His Messenger. On the contrary, these people were true in faith. Hence just like a child who in fear clings even more closely to his mother when she

the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness and their souls suffered affliction and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him. Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful.

scolds him, they ran to seek God's refuge to save themselves from His wrath. They neither presented any false excuse nor connived with others. To one of them – Ka'b ibn Mālik – the king of Ghassān sent a letter to him to give him refuge. He wrote that he had heard how their Prophet (sws) been cruel to him and that Ka'b was someone whose life should be wasted like this. He expressed that if Ka'b comes to him, he will be duly valued. But Ka'b tore up this letter and had it burnt. This is because he had faith in the fact that only God's mercy can save a person from His accountability. The king of Ghassān cannot save him. It is this belief which is the essence of faith and monotheism. If a person who is taken to task by God consigns himself to Him with this belief, then His mercy effervesces even more.

Consider next, the part: "Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful." God gave them the urge to repent once their hearts had become soft after they had borne the pangs of isolation. The verb **يَتُوبُوا** occurs in its complete sense. As for the confession of sins, these three too did so, as indicated earlier. However, at that time, their repentance had not been accepted. The reason, as referred before, was that these people had great confidence in the services rendered for religion. For this reason, neither did they realize the intensity of their mistake nor did the extent of regret and remorse they showed was befitting enough. The sincerity of every person cannot be measured by the same yardstick. Thus God made them pass through a tough trial so that they and through them others also get to know how much remorse is needed for repentance to be accepted by God.

The words "then God turned to them in affection so that they repent" clarify another fact: repentance basically begins from God. It is He Who creates the urge in His servants to repent. When a person repents, God again shows His affection to him and accepts his repentance. Such is the nature on which God has made a human being that if he has faith in it, his heart grieves at every sin he commits and with regret and remorse the feeling of turning to his Lord arises in him. If a person gets ready to act according to this feeling, the Almighty provides his heart and tongue with words that reflect these feelings and which are dear to Him. He then accepts these sentiments. Only those unfortunate people are deprived from it who are who have lulled their conscience to sleep and whose faith has become lifeless. Such people become heedless of God. The punishment they get for this is that God also becomes heedless of them. The anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah is a very revealing example in this regard. Readers may take a look at what we have written while explaining verse 37 of that *sūrah*.

99. **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ** ﴿١١٩﴾

99. Believers! Keep fearing God and be in the company of the truthful.

After the beliefs and deeds of the believers are cleansed, now certain other guidelines are being to them. Following them would ensure that in future also they would be able to keep their deeds free from the adulteration of disbelief and hypocrisy.

This first guideline shows that company and companionship has a great role in the development or decadence of a person's character. If a person lives in the company of disbelievers and hypocrites as well as the ignorant, even people having strong personalities get influenced, let alone the weak ones. By the same token, if people having a weak character live in the company of people whose faith and deeds are on the right footing, they get inspired to overcome their weakness and gradually elevate themselves to the category of their influencers. It was because of this effect of companionship that people who were living in the abode of disbelief (*dār al-kufr*) were asked to migrate to the abode of belief (*dār al-islām*). Similarly, Muslims who lived in the suburbs of Madīnah were asked to send groups from among them one after the other to the Madīnah for the purpose of training and instruction. In this way, they would remain connected to the Prophet (saws) and the companions. The circumstances in which the hypocrites and Bedouins lived have been referred to earlier. It is evident from them that their bad company played a very strong role in their spiritual and moral ailments. It is for this reason, that the verse emphasizes that the company of the truthful should be adopted. Fear of God is the protector of a person's heart. It protects a person from inside. The company of the truthful reinforces a person from outside against the onslaughts of Satan. صِدِّقِينَ translated as "truthful" are those in whose words and deeds, there exists complete harmony. In other words, it is the opposite of the word "hypocrite."

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْبَدْيَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِك بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَطْئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نِيلاً إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ يَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

100. It was not befitting for the Bedouins of Madīnah and those who lived nearby that they sit behind leaving God and His Messenger. Neither was it befitting for them to regard their own life to be dearer than his. This is because whatever thirst, fatigue and hunger they are afflicted with in the cause of God and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers and injury on an enemy, in exchange for all these one pious deed is written for them. God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough. And whatever small or large amount they spend in charity and whatever valley they traverse, all is written down for them so that God can best reward them for

These verses emphasize what is said earlier: weak Muslims are encouraged to spend time in the company of the truthful; every difficulty they suffer earns them reward from God. The implication is that when it is with such graciousness that God deals with His servants, then it is not befitting for the people of Madīnah and those living in its suburbs to show hesitancy in siding by God’s Messenger and give preference to their own lives over his. It is also not permissible for future too that a person seeing hardships and dangers leave the advocates of the truth and adopt the company of evil and evil doers.

The words “God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough” points to the condition necessary for the acceptance of deeds by God. “Thoroughness” implies that these deeds are done merely to please God and not anyone else in the slightest way.

The words “and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers” refer to those measures which are meant to produce discouragement in the disbelievers; they make them sorrowful and this also creates the awe of the believers over them.

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا

رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

This verse also further emphasizes the need of companionship of the truthful. In verse 97, it is stated that the Bedouins have spent very little time with the Prophet (sws) and his companions. They are unaware of the bounds of the permissible and the impermissible. For this reason, they are an easy prey when attacked by disbelief and hypocrisy. This verse informs them of the antidote to this weakness. If it is not possible for all to leave their places and visit the Prophet (sws) and his companions, at least a few could have done so. The implication is that if until then, they fell short of this, they should now take up this duty and their groups should come to Madīnah one after the other. They should obtain sound understanding of religion and then go back and teach their people. In this way, the village-dwellers would be able to look after their houses and cattle and also get to benefit from the company of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. It is evident from historical reports that the companions had fixed turns to come to the Mosque of the Prophet (sws). Through this mutual cooperation they would be able to run their errands and also at the same time benefit from the gatherings of the Prophet (sws).

The expression used in the verse to get educated in religion is لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ. It means to obtain a sound understanding and insight of religion. The word used for instruction

their deeds.

101. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

is إنذار. It means “to warn” and “to caution” and to specially urge people to prepare for the hereafter. Both this expression and this word are used with reference to the purpose of education. In Islam, the real purpose of education is to obtain sound insight of religion and educate and instruct others for success in the hereafter. All other things are secondary and are subservient to this objective.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

This verse is a summary of the whole subject-matter of the *sūrah*. After conclusive communication of the truth to the Idolaters and the People of the Book, it proclaims acquittal from them. It has become evident from verses 23-24 that the hypocrites were not prepared to wage war against the neighbouring Idolaters and People of the Book because of being related to them; they also had friendly ties and common business interests with them. They were not prepared to break these links with them. After exposing them and after explaining the requisites of true faith, piety and righteousness, the real demand of faith is once again put forth before them in this verse. Though the address is general, concomitant indications show that the words are directed towards them. Just as the neighbouring Idolaters and People of the Book were the most worthy of being invited by them to faith and guidance, they now after conclusive communication of the truth and proclamation of war, have become the most worthy of their swords. People who show a compromising attitude towards them because of their family and friendship ties will be regarded as those who have been unjust to their souls the most, as has been indicated in verse 23. Thus in verse 24, they are warned that they should wait until God delivers His verdict about them. The real spirit of faith and sincerity is kindled when a person has to wage war with one's own kin. The expression “around you” refers to this very fact.

The words “and let them find sternness in you” imply that just as they, as a nation, are enemies of the believers, the believers too should reciprocate this. Until then, the hypocrites found a soft corner in their hearts and hence expected they could use them to achieve their objective. Now this situation must end.

The words “and you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits” can have two aspects. The hypocrites must not show any weakness in fighting against these. God helps His pious servants; if they adhere to piety, they will triumph and their opponents will be humiliated. The implication of God being with someone is that He will necessarily help them.

The second aspect is to warn the believers: they must abide by all the bounds of God in showing sternness and in waging war against the disbelievers. In no phase, should they exceed these bounds because God is only a companion of His pious

102. Believers! wage war against the disbelievers around you and let them find sternness in you. And you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits.

people. Earlier, it has been emphasized that the covenants of those Idolaters and People of the Book who have abided by them should be fulfilled. Moreover, the sacred months must be shown respect. These words stress precisely this.

وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَآمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفْرُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ هَلْ يَرِيكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾¹⁰³

These verses refer to those hypocrites who in spite of all the warnings and admonitions sounded by this *sūrah* continued to adhere to their hypocrisy. In fact, their hypocrisy gradually increased. No warning from God could urge them to repent until death overtook them in this condition.

The word *sūrah* can refer to a particular *sūrah* of the Qur'ān or to some specific directive or part of it.

These hypocrites would go to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) just to put up a show of pretence and to satisfy the believers. There they would encounter new demands from the Qur'ān every day. They would be recited out various directives. These everyday directives would weigh down heavily on them. They did not have the courage to say anything openly against them. So, they would vent their emotions by passing sarcastic remarks. An example of these is cited in these verses. Their objective was to disparage the directives of God and His Messenger and to discourage the believers.

The answer given to such poisonous remarks is also cited. At no stage of their life do these element find an urge in them to repent and they die in this state of this disbelief.

The fact that the verses of the Qur'ān gradually increase the faith of the believers and make the hypocrisy of the hypocrites even more pronounced is not a metaphor. It is a statement of fact. Each directive of the Qur'ān opens up a sphere of competition for the Muslims and when they win in this sphere their faith receives encouragement and the volition to win in other spheres until finally they gradually reach the highest

103. And when a *sūrah* is revealed, there are some among them also who ask: “Whose faith among you has it increased?” So, those who have actually believed, it increases their faith and they receive glad tidings from it. As for those whose hearts have an ailment, it increases their filth with another filth and they die as disbelievers. Do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice? Even then, they do not repent or take heed? And when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: “Is there anyone watching?” Then they slip away. God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand.

point of honour. On the other hand, the hypocrites bear one deprivation after another and one defeat after another and ultimately become totally devoid of any speck of faith and resolve. Layers of hypocrisy one upon the other envelop their hearts to the extent that all the abilities which God has blessed them with at birth are trampled beneath and die away.

The question “do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice?” gives the reason why these people are deprived of the urge to repent. God is merciful and so He shakes and jolts people, whether of low or high status, once or twice a year to wake from their slumber of indifference and repent before Him. If these people too had reflected they would have come to know that their ailment has reached such an extent that the doors of repentance have been closed for them.

From such trials and incidents, people who have the urge to repent, learn a lesson. However, people who are deprived of this urge because of their misdeeds learn nothing from these trials. The hypocrites under discussion have reached this very stage. No reversal can open their eyes

Consider the sentence: “even then, they do not repent or take heed.” The first part points to their callousness and the second to their thick headedness. This is because repentance relates to the heart and taking heed relates to the intellect. In other words, their misdeeds have rendered their faculties of heart and intellect as useless.

The words “and when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: “is there anyone watching?” pictures how the hypocrites whisk away from the gatherings of the Prophet (sws). When the Prophet (sws) would call the believers on important occasions like preparing for a new campaign or informing them of new directives of the Qur’ān, these hypocrites too would reluctantly come just to put up a show. When they would see that something difficult was at hand and if they remained in the gathering, they would have to take responsibilities, they would furtively glance at one another. The implication being that they should leave the place if any of the believers is not watching them. They would then secretly slip away. This attitude of the Hypocrites is depicted in more detail in the Sūrah al-Nūr thus:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ فَإِذَا اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذَنَ لِمَن شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۚ لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ۚ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَلْلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لَوْ أَذًا ۚ فليَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

(٢٤ : ٦٢-٦٣)

Only they are true believers who have faith in God and His Messenger. And when they are together for some collective task, they do not go away from there unless

they seek permission from the Messenger. Those who go after seeking permission from you, only they are the ones who have faith in God and His Messenger. So, when they seek permission from you for some need they have, you can give permission to whomsoever you like and pray to God for their forgiveness. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. People! When the Messenger calls you, do not regard this calling to be similar to how you call one another. God fully knows those among you who have been secretly slipping away while hiding behind others. So, those people who been evading the Messenger's directive should fear that a trial may afflict them or a painful punishment visit them. (24:62-63)

The words “God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand” mean that because of their own evasion, God turned their hearts away. It signifies a curse. In verse of Sūrah al-Şaff, it is similarly said: ¹⁰⁴ فَلَمَّا رَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ. When a person reaches this stage, his heart is sealed and it is evident from the verse under discussion that this is the consequence of his own misdeeds. The part “these are people who do not understand” implies that when they adopt this attitude even after warnings from God, their faculties are turned by God to wherever they want to go.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾ ¹⁰⁵

Both these verses were revealed as a final warning. Though the address is general, it is evident from the context that they are directed towards people who did not of duly value the Prophet (sws) as a great favour done to the Arabs in particular. Indeed, he was a great favour to others too. The words “from among yourselves” show the nature of this favour as well as the fact that because he belongs to them the nature of his preaching will become conclusive.

The sentence “it weighs down heavily on him if you suffer” implies that contrary to their thinking that the Prophet (sws) will bring hardships to them, he is in fact very troubled to see if they are afflicted by them. He wants them to be secure from the hardships of not only this world, but also of the next. His desire is that they earn success in both worlds. Thus all his efforts and all his endeavours to educate them are for this very purpose. People who regard this life to be all that there is find his measures that are against their worldly interests weighing down heavily on them. The

104. So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray.

105. There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. It weighs down heavily on him if you suffer. He is desirous of your faith and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers. Thus if they turn away, say: God is sufficient for me. There is no deity except Him. I have trusted Him alone and He is the Lord of the glorious throne.

fact is that if these people knew the importance of the next world, they would have realized that all the worries of the Prophet (sws) are not for his own self; he actually wants to save them from worries and sorrows.

The expression “he is desirous of your faith” implies that if the Prophet (sws) is after them, it is not because he has his own agenda; his sole purpose is their welfare and wants them to accept faith. Just as an affectionate father always wishes well for his children, the Prophet (sws) too wants all the good of this world and the next for them. Those who do not value such concern are unfortunate.

Consider the attributes رَّءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (embodiment affection and mercy). Evident in the first is revulsion to evil and in the second blessings of goodness and permanance of mercy. Both these attributes are from among God’s noble qaulities which are exactly used here for Muḥammad (sws). It is evident from this that in the matter of showing affection and mercy to the creatures the noble prophet was a manifestation of divine attributes. The words “and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers” are an explanation of the Prophet (sws) being desirous of their faith. That is why there is no coordinating particle after حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ in رَّءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ.

The Prophet (sws) is addressed in the last verse. If people do not value God’s great favour of sending a messenger to them, it is their own loss and not of him. Contrary to this, he is desirous of their faith and very concerned of their success in this world and the next. They are its sole beneficiaries and not the Prophet (sws). If they value him, they are only earning success in both worlds but they are not realizing this. Thus the Prophet (sws) should not be concerned about them and should clearly tell them that God is sufficient for him. If they do not accept his call, it does not mean that he will become helpless and alone. He who trusts the Lord of the glorious throne does not care if others do not care.

This brings me to an end to the explanation of this *sūrah* today, Friday, at 9 am. May God forgive our blemishes and make a place of the truth in our hearts

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ اَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
15 August 1969