

Surah Muhammad, Verses 22 – 38

Surah Muhammad – Verse 22

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ

22. Then if you [who are sick at heart and frail of faith] turn away from [jihad], you are solely expected to do mischief in the land and sever your ties of kinship.

Turning away from religion and Qur'anic injunctions prepares the ground for corruption and mischief.

Severing the ties of kinship is a sin which is on a par with doing corruption in the land;

(**“to do mischief in the land and sever your ties of kinship”**).

The blessed Verse addresses those who are frail of faith and turn away from engagement in jihad to save their lives and says unto such people that they should not imagine that they may save themselves through abstaining from engagement in jihad since through deserting they merely pave the way for further corruption and slaughter whose consequence will affect you.

You look for the opportunity to do mischief in the land and sever the ties of kinship as you did all wrongs to gain further property in the pre-Islamic times of ignorance (jahiliyya).¹

Surah Muhammad – Verse 23

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعَمَّى أَبْصَارَهُمْ

23. Such are they whom Allah has cursed so that He has made them deaf and blinded their sight [to hinder them from perceiving the truth].

Those who desert jihad, do corruption, and sever ties of kinship are cursed by Allah. Deprivation of Divine Mercy is the consequence of our own acts.

The blessed Verse says that such people, i.e., hypocrites, who do corruption in the land and sever the ties of kinship incur Divine damnation, as a consequence of which God has made them deaf and blinded their sight so that they do not perceive the apparent and concealed signs

(“[They are] *deaf, dumb, and blind. So they do not understand*”)².

Surah Muhammad – Verse 24

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

24. Do they not then think deeply about the Qur’an or are their hearts locked up?

The Holy Qur’an is not solely for recitation but is the Book of thought and meditation.

Recitation is supposed to be the prelude of thought and meditation;

(“*Do they not then think deeply about the Qur’an?*”).

Everyone is supposed to think about the Qur’an and thinking is not limited to a specific group of people. The Verse raises an objection regarding those who do not think about the Qur’an to benefit from its secrets.

“Are their hearts locked up”

so that they learn nothing of the warnings and promises mentioned in the Qur’an? Their unfortunate state lies either in their carelessness toward the Perfect Divine Guidance or in their lack of perception owing to the insensitivity of their hearts and following their vain desires and their vicious acts committed earlier. One who loses his way in darkness is either blind or does not carry a light. Such hypocrites who are sick at heart failed to think about the Qur’an.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 25

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ

وَأْمَلَىٰ لَهُمْ

25. Verily, those who have turned back as disbelievers after the guidance has been manifested to them – Satan has beautified for them [their vicious acts] and has deceived them with long awaited [vain] desires.

Being tempted by Satan is a blight of faith which leads to apostasy and misfortune;

(“Verily, those who have turned back as disbelievers”).

Satan works through beautification of vicious acts.

Whoever beautifies vicious acts is satanic;

(“Satan has beautified for them [their vicious acts]”).

The Verse depicts those who being aware of the decisive argument believed in the Islamic faith but through satanic beautification of their vices turned away from the true religion. Such people have been deceived by worldly possessions and pleasures of the flesh. They underestimated turning away from their religion.

It is also said that they are the hypocrites who following their turning to the truth of the Islamic faith and uttering the formula of Divine Unity and the prophethood of the Messenger of God were deceived by satanic beautification of their vices and vain desires and turned away from the true religion. One who believes in the Islamic faith through discernment and spiritual perception will never turn away from it.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 26

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرَهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ سَنُطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
إِسْرَارَهُمْ

26. This is because they [apostates who are sick at heart] said to those who dislike what Allah has sent down: “We will obey you partially of the matter.” But Allah knows their secrets.

Hypocrites promise aid and support and even obedience to those who are displeased with Divine Decrees.

They collaborate with disbelievers and enemies of the Islamic faith;

“We will obey you partially of the matter”).

Thus the blessed Verse explains the reasons behind such beautification and embellishment.

They said unto those who disliked the Divine Revelation sent down to the Prophet of Islam (S);

“We will obey you in part of the matter.”

Hypocrites look for desperate opponents and if they do not share common denominators with them in all respects, they collaborate with them or obey them to the extent of the common denominators. Medinan hypocrites turned to Jews.

Jews from Banu Nadhir and Banu Quraydha were among the promulgators of the Islamic faith prior to the Prophet's (S) prophethood but following his Divine appointment to prophethood and owing to jealousy, arrogance, and as their interests were in jeopardy, they became displeased with the advent of Islam and promised to render aid to hypocrites because of their common denominators as to disagreement with and hatching plots against him.

“Partially for the matter”

indicates that the Jews agreed to collaborate with hypocrites but they believed in resurrection and disagreed with their idolatry.

The Verse ends in a concise warning;

“Allah knows their secrets.”

He is aware of their disbelief, hypocrisy, and their conspiring with the Jews and will chastise them in the proper season. God also knows about the jealousy and enmity concealed in the hearts. They had read their scriptures and had been apprised of the signs of the Prophet of Islam (S) such that they were able to recognize him like their own child.

However, following the proclamation of his prophethood, they failed to make mention of such signs. God is aware of their secrecy.

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq (as),

“those who dislike what Allah has sent down”

refers to the Umayyads who were displeased with the Revelation of the Divine Decree concerning the Imamate of 'Ali (as).³

Surah Muhammad – Verses 27–28

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهُهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَسْخَطَ اللَّهَ وَكَرَهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ

27. Then how will it be when the angels will take their souls at death, smiting their faces and their backs?

28. That is because they followed that which angered Allah and disliked that which pleased Him. So He made their deeds fruitless.

The word tawfi indicates “taking back in full what has been given to someone.” The word is employed in the Qur’an in the sense of “death” since death is actually taking back the soul from the body. Death is not on a par with annihilation but it denotes taking back the soul in full by the angels.

Attending to the transience of the world, the end of conspiracies, and tasting the torment may hinder man from hatching plots. The blessed Verse warns those who are deceived by satanic beautification of their vices and make Muslims turn away from the Path of Truth through empty promises. All creatures are the Divine Host. Angels responsible for taking the souls also constitute the Divine Host.

They are the enemies of God’s enemies and the friends of God’s friends. Wielding their blazing whips they strike blows on the enemies of God since they followed falsehood and turned away from Truth. They followed the objects of Divine Wrath and disliked to obtain His Satisfaction. Their good deeds, if any, will be rendered vain and they will be the objects of Divine Wrath.⁴

Surah Muhammad – Verses 29–30

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَنْ لَنْ يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنَاكُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
أَعْمَالَكُمْ

29. Or do those in whose hearts is a disease [of hypocrisy] think that Allah will not bring to light all their hidden ill-wills [and jealousy]?

30. Had We willed, We could have shown them to you and you should have known them by their marks but surely you will know them by the tone of their speech! And Allah knows [all] your [apparent and secret] deeds.

Sinners' disgrace is not merely for the Resurrection Day but they may be ashamed in this world too. Hypocrites may be known through their tone of speech. When the Messenger of God (S) appointed 'Ali (as) as his successor at Ghadir Khum, some people said that Muhammad (S) did so out of nepotism. It was the occasion for sending down these Verses.⁵

These Verses make mention of the marks and qualities of hypocrites and emphasize that they may not conceal their real intentions from the Prophet (S) and believers and thereby save themselves from being disgraced.

Verse 29 reads:

“Or do those in whose hearts is the disease [of hypocrisy] think that Allah will not bring to light all their hidden ill-wills [and jealousy]?”

The word adhghan is the plural form of dhighn denoting “rancor, (secret) hatred.” Hypocrites entertained severe hatred against the Prophet (S) and believers and were at all times looking for the opportunity to strike a blow on them. The Holy Qur'an warns them that they may not conceal their real intentions from the Prophet (S) and believers.

Verse 30 further adds:

“Had We willed, We could have shown them to you and you should have known them by their marks,”

in other words God marks their faces by which their hypocrisy could be evident to everyone.

Thus the Verse proceeds:

“but surely you will know them by the tone of their speech! And Allah knows [all] your [apparent and secret] deeds.”

In his Mufradat Raghīb says that lahn indicates deviation from linguistic norms such as incorrect conjugation and inflection or employment of metaphorical expressions in lieu of using words in their literal sense. The latter is intended by the Verse, namely such hypocrites who are sick at heart may be exposed through their use of hypocritical and mischievous metaphorical expressions.

Hypocrites make attempts at weakening the will power of the people so as they refrain from engagement

in jihad. They try to make people veer off the course of truth and justice. They try to somehow assassinate the character of the pious and the pioneers of the Islamic faith.

According to a recurrently transmitted narration narrated by Abu Sa'id Khudri:

*"We knew hypocrites at the time of the Messenger of God (S) through their hostile tone of speech concerning 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as)."*⁶

Thus an evident mark of the hypocrites was their animosity against the first believer from among men and the forerunner in supporting the cause of the Islamic faith.

As a general rule, one may not entertain anything in his heart and conceal it for long such that he may not be exposed by his tone of speech and metaphorical expressions.

Thus a narration by the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), says:

*"One may not conceal anything without being exposed by his slips of tongue uncovering [his true intention reflected in] his face"*⁷.

Hypocrites' mischievous tone of speech and their suspicious gestures and postures are to be found elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an. It is on the same grounds that a number of exegetes maintain that it was following the Revelation of the Verse in question that the Prophet (S) was able to fully recognize hypocrites through their characteristics.

Thus the Noble Prophet received the Injunction to neither establish the funeral prayer for hypocrites nor ask for their forgiveness of God at their grave:

"And never prayer [funeral prayer] for any of them [hypocrites] who dies, nor stand at his grave"⁸).

The Verse ends in;

"And Allah knows [all] your [apparent and secret] deeds."

God Almighty is fully aware of all their innermost intentions and their outward deeds.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 31

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ

31. And surely We will try you till We test those who strive hard [for Allah's Cause] and the

patient and We shall test your facts [and deeds].

The word Ibtala' may indicate trying people to discover the truth and may also denote making diverse preparations for giving vent to innermost feelings such as those mentioned in the Verse.9 Na'lama ("we let know") is from 'alam ("mark") rather than 'ilm (knowledge), the antonym of jahl ("ignorance") connoting that they will be known through Divine Trial.

To lay further emphasis and demonstrate the ways of distinguishing believers from hypocrites the Verse reads:

"Surely We will try you till We test those who strive hard [for Allah's Cause] and the patient."

Thus pseudo-warriors and unprincipled and characterless hypocrites may be exposed.

The trial is vast in scope and covers patience and clemency in fulfilling all obligations; however, taking into consideration the word mujahidin:

("those who strive [in the Cause of Allah]")

in the preceding and following Verses indicates that trial on the battlefield is intended. Such battlefield is the arena of a hard and great trial in which few people may conceal their true intentions.

The Verse ends in:

"We shall test your facts [and deeds]."

Many an exeget have held that akhbar ("facts") denotes deeds since whose news spreads among people. Some have also maintained that the word ad hoc is used in the sense of innermost secrets since they are reflected by deeds. The word may also denote the news which people communicate concerning their state or their responsibilities.

For instance hypocrites:

"had already made a covenant with Allah not to turn their backs"¹⁰

to the battlefield but they broke it.

A number of them also asked for permission of the Prophet (S) to return from the battlefield saying:

"Our homes lie open [to the enemy]. And they lay not open. They but wished to flee"¹¹.

Thus Allah tries deeds, words, and facts. It is not the first time that people are informed of being tried so that a distinction may be drawn between true believers and hypocrites and those of frail faith. The point is raised in many instances in the Qur'an.

“Till We test those who strive hard [for Allah’s Cause]”

does not connote that Allah is unaware of them but the Omniscient God is fully aware of them and such people and their stance are to be exposed through His Omniscience.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 32–33

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ
الْهُدَىٰ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيُحِبِّطُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ

32. Verily those who disbelieve and hinder [people] from the Path of Allah and oppose the Messenger after the guidance has been clearly shown to them they will not hurt Allah in the least but He will make their deeds fruitless.

33. O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and render not vain your deeds.

According to Qur’anic Verses and traditions, a number of words and deeds render vain diverse deeds, e.g. hurting the needy which renders vain rewards.

Following a delineation of the hypocrites’ and disbelievers’ stance against the Islamic faith, the Verse in question says:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and render not vain your deeds.”

The fact is that believers take an opposite stance in all matters against disbelievers and hypocrites. The former obey the Divine Decree where as the latter disobey it. The deeds of the latter are rendered vain through their disbelief, dissimulation, and hurting others but the rewards of the former are preserved at Divine Threshold.

The tone of the Verse indicates that there were believers at the time who failed to meet their obligations in terms of obeying God and His Messenger and preserving their deeds from being rendered vain. God warns them against such neglect. According to some exegetes, the occasion for the revelation of the Verse is the conversion of Banu Asad tribe to the Islamic faith.

They said unto the Prophet (S) that they were prepared to sacrifice themselves and their families for his cause, but their tone of speech somehow reflected the Prophet’s (S) indebtedness for their favor. The

Verse was sent down as a warning against their attitude.

Some experts in the field of Islamic law maintain that:

“and render not vain your deeds”

refers to the unlawfulness of leaving the daily prayers incomplete; however, taking into consideration the preceding and the following Verses as well as the Verse in question indicates otherwise. The Verse indicates rendering vain the good deeds out of polytheism, hypocrisy, hurting others and the like.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 34

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

34. Indeed those who disbelieve and hinder [people] from the Path of Allah, then die while they are disbelievers. Allah will not forgive them.

God Almighty is All-Forgiving and man may turn to Him at all times for repentance, but those who die in disbelief, apostasy, and hypocrisy may never be absolved of their sins. The Verse explicates and emphasizes the points raised in the preceding Verses regarding disbelievers. It also demonstrates the path of repentance to those inclined toward it.

The Verse reads:

“those who disbelieve and hinder [people] from the Path of Allah, then die while they are disbelievers. Allah will not forgive them,”

since death serves as a hindrance against repentance. Such people carry the heavy burden of their disbelief as well as that of leading others astray. How may God almighty forgive them? Thus these Verses make mention of hypocrites, disbelievers, and believers together with a delineation of their attributes and fates.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 35

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَتَرَكُمُ أَعْمَالِكُمْ

35. Therefore, be not weak and ask not for peace while you are having the upper hand. Allah is with you and He will never decrease the reward of your good deeds.

Believers are not supposed to be weak since steadfastness and endurance are the prerequisites of triumph. Thus Muslims are supposed to enhance their morale and remind themselves of their values. Pursuing the discussion on jihad, the Verse refers to a significant point – people of frail faith often raise the issue of making peace with the enemy in order to flee jihad and the hardships of the battlefield.

Making peace is indubitably appropriate in its proper season. Such peace leads Muslims to the attainment of Islamic sublime goals and may vouchsafe the dignity and greatness of Muslims rather than leading them to humiliation and contempt. The Verse encourages believers that having heard the previous injunctions they are not supposed to be weak nor do they ask the enemy to make peace with them while they have the upper hand.

In other words, now that their triumph and superiority is evident they are supposed to consider the peace treaty which implies withdrawal and defeat. Actually, it is not peace but surrender and complacency springing from frailty. Such vicious complacency will engender perilous and excruciating consequences.

To invigorate the Muslims' morale, the Verse ends in

“Allah is with you and He will never decrease the reward of your good deeds.”

When God Almighty is with someone, he will have all the means of triumph. He may never feel abandoned. He never entertains frailty in his heart nor does he surrender to the enemy.

Such person feels the responsibility upon his shoulders to not render vain the martyrs' blood shed in sensitive moments.

Wa lan yatrikum literally means “He will not abandon you,” but it figuratively indicates

“He will never decrease [the reward of your good deeds]”).

The root w-t-r denotes “to abandon” and watr is used in the senses of “single, separate, alone.” Those whose kith and kin fall in battle and leave them alone are termed as witr. The word also signifies defect and shortcoming. The Verse in question says that God will not abandon you but he will provide you with the rewards of your deeds.

Believers are aware of the fact that each step taken for jihad will be recorded and nothing shall be decreased of their rewards but God Almighty is so Bountiful that He will increase them.

The above bears testimony to the fact that the Verse in question is by no means inconsistent with:

“But if they incline to peace, you are also inclined toward it and trust Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearer, the Omniscient”¹².

None of the two abrogates the other, but each of the twain makes reference to a particular instance. One refers to the sensible peace and the other to the insensible one. The former meets all the demands of

the Muslims and the latter is raised at the threshold of triumph by Muslims who are frail of faith.

That is why the last Verse¹³ follows thus:

“And if they intend to deceive you, then verily, Allah is All-Sufficient for you”¹⁴.

In his epistle to Malik Ashtar, the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali (as) makes reference to both types of peace saying:

*“Whenever the enemy calls upon you to make peace with him in which lies God’s Satisfaction, do not decline the offer”*¹⁵.

The peace offered by the enemy and Divine Satisfaction indicate the division of the types of peace into the twain. Muslim leaders are supposed to use extra care in terms of distinguishing between types of peace and war which are among the most sophisticated and epoch making issues, since the slightest miscalculation will lead to fatal consequences.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 36

إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا يُؤْتِكُمْ أَجْرَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ
أَمْوَالَكُمْ

36. The life of this world is mere play and pastime, but if you believe and fear Allah and avoid evil, He will grant you your rewards and will not ask you your wealth.

The preceding Verse was a warning against frailty and complacency against disbelievers. The Verse in question makes a reference to the main ground behind frailty – attachment to worldly possessions: “Be careful to not be deceived by the world.”

The majority of people regard the world as the scene of pastime and pleasure, but believers consider it as the scene of Divine Manifestations consisting of Divine Signs, where they exchange the rewards of the Hereafter for righteous good deeds and obtaining merits and virtues. The blessed Verse encourages Muslims to obey God in general and raises the issue of jihad in particular.

It also refers to the vanity of mundane life since mundane attachments serve as a significant factor hindering people from engagement in jihad.

The Verse reads:

“The life of this world is mere play and pastime.”

The word la'ib ("play") is applied to involvement in a kind of imaginary order in order to attain to an imaginary goal. Lahw ("pastime") denotes what preoccupies man and leads to his deviation from fundamental issues. Indeed the life of the world is play and pastime since no advantage or permanence may be accrued from it. The pleasures of the transient world end in hardships.

The Verse further adds:

“but if you believe and fear Allah and avoid evil, He will grant you your rewards and will not ask you your wealth.”

Divine Rewards in this world and the Hereafter are all non gratia. Neither He nor His Messenger (S) ask for anything. He is All-Sufficient and His Messenger solely needs Him and no one else.

The meager amount of your wealth which is paid as alms tax and other religious levies are spent for you, the upkeep of orphans, the needy, and the stranded poor travelers and also for jihad, defending the security and independence of the land, maintenance of peace and security, meeting the needs, and the development of towns and cities.

Such meager amount is paid for your own sake since God is All-Sufficient. Therefore, there exists no inconsistency between the meaning of the Verse in question and those concerning expending for Allah's Cause, paying alms tax, and the like.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 37

إِنْ يَسْأَلْكُمْوهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبَخَّلُوا وَيُخْرِجْ أَضْغَانَكُمْ

37. If He were to ask you of it and press you, you would covetously withhold and He will bring out all your ill-wills.

The attachment of some men to worldly possessions is to the extent that even if God asks them for anything, they will entertain ill-wills against Him. Human character is exposed through his encounter with command and forbidding.

To demonstrate the extent to which most men are attached to worldly property and substance, the blessed Verse says:

“If He were to ask you of it and press you, you would covetously withhold and He will bring out all your ill-wills.”

The word yuhfikum is from ihfa' ("press or insist in claiming and asking") is originally taken from hafiya

(“go barefoot”). The expression is metaphorically used for the matters which are pursued by man to the end, an instance of which is ihfa' sharib denoting trimming moustaches as short as possible.

Idhghan is the plural form of dhighn which is, as mentioned above, used in the sense of severe hatred. In short, the Verse indicates the severe attachment of many a people to material possessions and in fact serves as a reproach to those entangled with such attachments but in the meanwhile is a source of encouragement for severing such mundane ties which may grow to the extent that even if God asks them for anything, they will develop anger and hatred against Him!

Thus He awakens the dormant soul of man with such reproach so that he may liberate himself from the shackles of mundane possessions and sacrifice everything for his Friend and in return ask Him to bestow faith, piety, and satisfaction upon him.

Surah Muhammad – Verse 38

هَآ اَنْتُمْ هُوَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوْا فِى سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخُلْ فَاِنَّمَآ
يَبْخُلُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَاللّٰهُ الْغَنِىُّ وَاَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا
يَكُوْنُوْا اَمْثَالَكُمْ

38. Behold! You are those who are called to spend in the Cause of Allah yet among you are some who are niggardly. And whoever is niggardly, it is solely at the expense of his own self. But Allah is All-Sufficient and you are poor. And if you turn away, He will exchange you for some other people and they will not be your likes [in terms of frailty of faith and niggardliness].

People are to be called to spend in the Cause of Allah and help others; however, they should be free to think and make their choice. One who is niggardly assumes that he has deprived people of his possessions. The last Verse emphasizes what has already been raised in the preceding Verses concerning material possessions and attachments to them and spending in the Cause of Allah saying: Behold!

You are the same people who are called to spend in the Cause of Allah; some of you obey the Divine Injunction but some others are niggardly;

(“yet among you are some who are niggardly”).

A question is raised here: God does not want your possessions in the preceding Verses; how come that the Injunction in this Verse concerns spending in the Cause of Allah? The Verse provides the answer to the question.

Firstly It says:

“whoever is niggardly, it is solely at the expense of his own self,”

since he will enjoy the consequences of his own spending in the Cause of Allah. In this manner, class gaps are diminished and security and peacefulness prevail in the society, and love and sincerity replaces animosity – this is your mundane reward. You will be compensated in this world and the Hereafter by Divine Bounties and Favors for each and every cent of your expenses in the Cause of Allah.

Such Bounties and Favors are not imaginable. Therefore, the more you are niggardly, the more you will pay for it!

In other words, spending in the Cause of Allah ad hoc refers to spending for jihad and the phrase

“in the Way or Cause of Allah” (fi sabil ‘Ilah)

is consistent with the denotation in question. Rendering any assistance in the Cause of jihad for Allah evidently guarantees the maintenance of the integrity, independence, and dignity of the society.

The other answer to the question is that :

“Allah is All-Sufficient and you are poor.”

He is Needless of your spending and your obedience, but it is you who are in need of Divine Favor, Mercy, and Reward in this world and the Hereafter. All possible beings besides God are actually in need and the only All-Sufficient Being by essence is God.

Possible beings are essentially and permanently dependent on Him and benefit at all times from His incessant fountainhead of emanation. Even if He ceases the emanation for one single moment, all existent beings vanish and

“all mold will shatter!”

The last sentence of the Verse is a warning to all Muslims to appreciate the great Divine Favor that He appointed you as the guardians of His pure religion so that you may support the Islamic faith and His Prophet (S).

Nonetheless,

“if you turn away, He will exchange you for some other people and they will not be your likes [in terms of frailty of faith and niggardliness].”

If you do not comprehend the significance of your situation and neglect such great responsibility, God

Almighty will raise another people, far superior to you in terms of sacrificing their life and possession in the Cause of Allah, to fulfill such great mission.

A similar great warning is attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

“O you who believe! Whoever from among you turns back from his religion [may never harm Allah], Allah will bring a people whom He will love and they will love Him; humble toward the believers, stern toward the disbelievers, fighting in the Way of Allah, and never fear of the blame of the blamers”¹⁶.

It is interesting to note that the majority of exegetes have related that following the revelation of the Verse a number of the Companions of the Prophet (S) inquired:

“Who are the people mentioned in this Verse?”

Salman sat close to the Prophet (S).

The prophet (S) put his hand on Salman's foot (or his shoulder as per another narration) and replied:

“This [man] and his people [i.e., Persians]. I swear to Him in Whose hand lies my life, if faith be attached to Pleiad (Thurayya, a star proverbial for remoteness), a group of Persians will get their hands on it.”

The above tradition and its likes have been recorded by prominent Sunni traditionists like Bayhaqi and Tirmidhi and Shi'i and Sunni exegetes of renown, e.g. authors of Tafsir Qurtubi, Ruh al-Bayan, and Majma' al-Bayan, and Fakhr al-Din Razi, Maraghi, and Abu 'l-Futuh Razi, have unanimously transmitted them as genuine traditions. A number of similar traditions are to be found in the exegetic work titled Durr al-Manthur under the Verse in question.¹⁷

Another tradition narrated on the authority of Imam Sadiq (as) may serve as a supplement to the above tradition, saying:

*“I swear by God that He has kept His Promise and a far better non-Arab people have replaced them.”*¹⁸

Taking a glance, devoid of any prejudice, at the history of Islam and Islamic sciences bears testimony to non-Arab, particularly Persian, contributions to jihad against the enemies of the Islamic faith on the one hand and their works in the field of Islamic sciences on the other. Space limitations hinder us from details in this respect.

It would be of interest to close the Chapter with a number of traditions on niggardliness:

The Messenger of God (S) said:

*“It is not befitting a believer to be niggardly and timid.”*¹⁹

The Messenger of God (S) said:

*“The twain character traits of niggardliness and bad temper may not be found in a Muslim.”*²⁰

Imam Husayn (as) said:

*“The niggardly person is he who is too niggardly to greet.”*²¹

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“The best of you are your generous people and the worst of you are your niggardly ones. Doing righteous good deeds and struggling to meet their demands are out of pure faith.”*²²

Imam Ridha (as) said:

*“The niggardly person is far from God, Paradise, and People.”*²³

1. According to a Prophetic tradition “Three groups will never enter Paradise: drinkers, sorcerers, and those who sever ties of kinship,” Saduq’s *Khisal* apud *Tafsir-i Nimuna*, vol. 7, p. 5.

2. 2:171

3. *Majma’ al-Bayan*, vol. 9, p. 105.

4. According to a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq (as) “who dislike what Allah has sent down” refers to Umayyads who were displeased with the Divine Decree regarding ‘Ali’s (as) Imamate, see *Nur al-Thiqalayn*, vol. 5, p. 43, hadith 70 apud Mufid’s *Rawdhat al-Wa’i’ûin*; *Majma’ al-Bayan*, vol.9, p.105. It is needless to say that it expresses the partial meaning of the Verse rather than the total meaning of the same.

5. *Tafsir al-Burhan*.

6. *Majma’ al-Bayan*, under the Verses in question. The general content of the narration is recorded in the sources by Sunni eminent scholars, e.g. *Fadha’il* by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Isti’ab* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Ta’rikh Awwal al-Islam* by Dhahabi, *Jami’ al-Usul* by Ibn Athir, *Kifayat al-Talib* by ‘Allama Ganji, *Riyadh al-Nadhra* by Muhibb al-Din Tabari, *Durr al-Manthur* by Suyuti, *Ruh al-Ma’ani* by ‘Alusi, and *Shawahid al-Tanzil* by Haskani. The inclusion of the narration in many a source bears testimony to the fact that it is a genuine Prophetic tradition. For further information, see *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 110 ff.

7. *Nahj al-Balagha*, aphorism 26

8. 9:84

9. *Raghib’s Mufradat*.

10. 33:15

11. 33:13

12. 8:61

13. 8:61

14. 8:62

15. *Nahj al-Balagha*, Epistle 53

16. 5:54

17. *Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 6, p.67.

18. *Majma’ al-Bayan*, vol.9, p. 108.

19. *Mahajja al-Baydha’*, vol.6, p. 74.

20. *Safina*, under *bukhl* (“niggardliness”); *Bihar*, vol. 70, p. 302; *Khisal*, vol.1, p. 38.

21. *Tuhaf al-’Uqul*, p. 283.

22. Bihar, vol.70, p. 307.

23. Safinat al-Bihar, under sakha' ("generosity").

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