

Surah al-Fath, Chapter 48, Verses 1 – 16

(The Victory)

Section (juz'): 26

Number of Verses: 29

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The Chapter in question has twenty nine Verses and it was revealed in the sixth year following the Treaty of Hdaybiyya in Medina.

The Chapter in question mainly treats of the glad tidings as to the conquest of Mecca and the issues pertained to the Treaty of Hdaybiyya, pledge of pleasure (bay'at al-ridhwan), hypocrites' sabotage, turning one's back to jihad, and finally mention is made of the Noble Prophet's (S) Companions.

As the title of the Chapter designates, it beacons triumph and victory over the enemies of Islam, a remarkable a decisive triumph, be it the conquest of Mecca or Khaybar or the Treaty of Hdaybiyya or triumph in the broad sense of the word. To appreciate the contents of the Chapter, it is required, above all, to know that the Chapter was revealed in the sixth year following the Treaty of Hdaybiyya.

The Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

According to a Prophetic tradition:

“One who recites the Chapter is on a par with one who served in the Noble Prophet's (S) army upon the conquest of Mecca.”

It is narrated in another tradition that such person

*“is like one who was beneath the tree in Hudaibiyya and gave him his pledge.”*¹

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

“Preserve your wives and possessions from perdition through the recitation of

‘Indeed, We have granted you a triumph.’

One who recites it at all times a caller shall call on the Day of Resurrection such that he will be heard by everyone saying:

*‘You are one of My sincere servants; take him to My righteous servants and admit him in bountiful gardens of Paradise and offer him the drink particular to the people of Paradise.’*²

It goes without saying that such excellence and honor may not be accrued with mere recitation devoid of thought and deeds, but the main goal of the recitation of the Chapter lies in establishing one’s deeds and disposition upon the contents of the Verses.

Wondrous traditions are attested in Islamic sources concerning the blessed Chapter in question. According to a tradition narrated on the authority of Anas,

“Upon our return from Hudaibiyya, polytheists impeded us from entering Mecca and performing voluntary (‘umra) pilgrimage.

We were deeply sad when God Almighty of a sudden revealed the Verse:

‘Indeed, We have granted you a manifest triumph.’

The Noble Prophet (S) is reported as saying:

*“A Verse has been revealed to me which I love more than the world.”*³

Surah al-Fath - Verses 1-3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا

لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا
مُسْتَقِيمًا

وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا

1. *Indeed, We have granted you a manifest triumph.*
2. *That Allah may forgive you your sins of the past and the future [attributed to you by Meccan polytheists] and complete His Favor on you and guide you on the Straight Path,*
3. *And that Allah may help you with invincible succor.*

Qur'anic exegetes disagree on the interpretation of

“a manifest triumph.”

Some of them, e.g. Alusi, Abu al-Futuh, ‘Allama Tabataba’i, and Faydh Kashani attribute it to the Treaty of Hdaybiyya and some others, e.g. Shaykh Tusi, Zamakhshari, and Fakhr Razi regard it as related to the conquest of Mecca and all of them have substantiated their views with certain traditions. The significance of the Treaty of Hdaybiyya lies in the fact that it served as a prelude to the conquest of Mecca and its ensuing remarkable triumphs.

Furthermore, to that time, polytheists solely entertained thoughts regarding Muslims’ perdition and did not recognize their position. Nonetheless, following the Treaty of Hdaybiyya, they recognized Muslims and such recognition served as a great triumph in the socio-political scene.

The

“manifest triumph”

makes a reference to the fact that approximately one thousand and forty hundred people were with the Noble Prophet (S) in the sixth year, but following two years, ten thousand people accompanied the Noble Prophet (S) in the conquest of Mecca.

There is not obscurity in Divine Guidance, rather all things are evident and illuminating including His Messenger;

“a Messenger explaining things clearly,”⁴

His Qur’an is clear and illuminating;

“a plain Qur’an,”⁵

It is expressed clearly and eloquently;

“This [the Qur’an] is a clear Arabic tongue,”⁶.

Its warnings are also unequivocal;

“He [Prophet Muhammad] is but a plain warner,”⁷.

Even its war and peace is unambiguous;

“manifest triumph,”⁸.

Thus, those standing against such transparency are in manifest error

“And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error,”⁹.

The noble Prophet of Islam (S) is addressed six times:

“We have granted you triumph ... for your forgiving, your sin, upon you, guides you, grants you succor.”

The word *dhanb* used in the second Verse signifies the consequence of anything and it is often employed in the sense of the consequence of sins and their evil consequences. Any truth seeking move is indubitably undesirable to those in error considering the call as sin and bring about diverse problems, concerns, persecutions, false accusations, conspiracies, and rumors against the callers.

Imam Ridha says:

“To polytheists, nobody was on a par with the Noble Prophet (S) in terms of the burden of sins, since he struggled against idolatry but polytheists worshipped three hundred and sixty idols prior to the conquest of Mecca. However, upon the conquest of Mecca and the decisive triumph of the Noble Prophet (S) and Muslims, all the faults remained concealed.”¹⁰

As a consequence, such sins were imaginative rather than actual thus regarded by polytheists and idolaters. It is worthy of note that the direction of prayers changed to that of Ka’ba in the second year following Hijra, i.e. the Noble Prophet’s migration from Mecca to Medina.

Furthermore, the Treaty of Hudaibiyya was concluded in the sixth year and the conquest of Mecca occurred in the eighth year when the Promise to the completion of the most exalted Divine Favors in future was proclaimed.

However, it was on the Noble Prophet’s (S) farewell pilgrimage (*hajjat al-wida’*) that the Promise was actualized through his announcement of ‘Ali (as) as the Imam, saying:

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen

for you Islam as your religion”¹¹.

Account of the Treaty of Hdaybiyya. It was in the month of Dhu al-Qa’da of 6 AH / March 628 that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) departed for Mecca intending to go on pilgrimage. Having encouraged Muslims to accompany him on the pilgrimage, one thousand and forty Muslims wearing pilgrims’ garment accompanied him.

Apprised of the intelligence, Meccan polytheists stopped them in the vicinity of Mecca at the Village of Hdaybiyya and impeded them from reaching Mecca. Delegates from both parties entered into negotiations and the polytheists’ representative noticed that Muslims feel such love for the Noble Prophet (S) that they take the drops of water used by him when performing ablution before daily prayers.

The representative informed polytheists of the same saying that they might not sever the bond between the Noble Prophet (S) and Muslims.

Representing Muslims, ‘Uthman went to Mecca to negotiate with Meccan polytheists, but rumors became widespread that he had been murdered in Mecca. To keep Muslims alert, the Noble Prophet (S) had Muslims gather beneath a tree to renew his allegiance with them. The allegiance was termed Bay’at al-Ridhwan.

‘Uthman returned safe after a few days. Participated by representatives from both parties, a session was held in which a treaty was drafted with a number of articles and ‘Ali (as) wrote down the text of the treaty which was signed by representatives.

According to the treaty, both parties assumed obligations including: keeping away from engaging in war for a period of ten years; Muslims had to return from Hdaybiyya to return the next year for a three day pilgrimage to Mecca; the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) ordered that the camels brought for pilgrimage be sacrificed there; Muslims shave their heads and took off their pilgrimage garments to return to Mecca.

Although Muslims did not perform their pilgrimage rituals in Mecca, but the Treaty ensured that that there would be no war for ten years and performing the pilgrimage rituals would be unimpeded, hence the manifest triumph for Muslims. The Treaty put an end to polytheists’ manifest enmity against Muslims, opened the path of propagation of the Islamic faith, and paved the way for consolidation of their might and the prospective conquest of Mecca.

It is worthy of note that we need to know that success and triumph springs from Divine Support rather than our thought, schemes, prudence, and might:

(“Indeed, We have granted you a manifest triumph”).

The other point is that the Noble Prophet (S) enjoys Divine Support as he is addressed in:

“We have granted you triumph, to forgive your sins, to guide you, to render you triumphant.”

Thus, what God Almighty bestows upon man is the most exalted, the most manifest, and the best. He grants manifest victory, perfect bounties, guidance to the Straight Path, and invincible succor.

Surah al-Fath – Verse 4

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

4. He it is the One Who sent down serenity into the hearts of believers so that they may grow more in faith along with their faith. And to Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth and Allah is Ever Omniscient, All-Wise.

The Arabic word sakina designates serenity and calm. Whoever is granted such Divine Favor shall enjoy many a consequence. He is not afraid of being blamed. He puts his trust in God. If he loses something, he shall not be saddened by the loss. If he gains something, he shall not rebel nor shall he disobey Divine Commands. He shall not be affected by people's respect or indifference, fame, obscurity, poverty, or affluence.

In the same manner that frightening disbelievers is Divine Succor;

(“We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve,”)¹²,

serenity is also a Divine Favor granted to believers' hearts:

(“is the One Who sent down serenity into the hearts of believers”).

Therefore, peace of mind is solely possible through Divine Favor and it may not be accrued from any other source.

The aforementioned Verses reflect the Great Favors bestowed by God Almighty upon the Noble Prophet (S) as consequences of the manifest triumph, namely the Treaty of Hdaybiyya.

However, the blessed Verse in question treats of a Great Favor bestowed upon all believers:

“He it is the One Who sent down serenity into the hearts of believers so that they may grow more in faith along with their faith.”

Believers shall definitely be rewarded by serenity and peace of mind, since;

“To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth and Allah is Ever Omniscient, All-Wise.”

The Arabic word sakina is cognate with sukun which designates such serenity and peace of mind that removes any doubt and fear from man's heart and makes him persevere in the face of the tempest of vicissitudes.

Such serenity may be ideological and remove ideological debilitation or it may be practical such that it may provide man with perseverance and patience. It is worthy of note that taking into account the foregoing discussions and the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse in question, it mainly alludes the former sense. Even if faith had not other fruits but such serenity and peace of mind, they would have sufficed to make man welcome it from the bottom of his heart.

However, the fact is that faith engenders many other bounties and favors.

Taking a glance at the states of believers and disbelievers reflects that the latter suffer from permanent anxiety and concern, whereas the latter enjoy unequalled peace of mind as a consequence of which they fear no one but Allah:

“And fear none but Allah,”¹³

Whether faith be taken in the sense of knowledge and awareness or the spirit of submission to God Almighty, it consists of different degrees and even love and passion together with faith are different.

The clause:

“so that they may grow more in faith along with their faith”

lays emphasis on the same truth.

Consequently, believers are not supposed to stay at one stage of faith, but they need to ascend to more elevated stages through self-purification through knowledge and practice.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) that:

*“There are ten degrees to faith in the same manner that one ascends the steps of a ladder.”*¹⁴

Each of the two clauses closing the blessed Verse in question,

“to Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth and Allah is Ever Omniscient, All-Wise,”

reflects one of the reasons lying behind believers' serenity.

The former ensures man that if he believes in God Almighty; He shall support you with all the forces of the heavens and the earth. The latter says unto him that God Almighty is All-Aware of his needs, problems, struggles, and obedience. Having faith in these two principles will lead to his serenity and peace of mind.

Surah al-Fath - Verse 5

لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً

5. That He may admit the believing men and the believing women to Gardens [in Paradise] under which rivers flow [beneath trees] to abide therein forever and He may expiate from them their sins and that is with Allah a supreme salvation and success.

Descent of Divine serenity increases faith and prepares the path for being admitted to Paradise.

Believers' great and real happiness and salvation lie in serenity in this world and abode in Paradise in the Hereafter.

A number of Shi'i and Sunni Qur'anic exegetes narrate that upon the revelation of the opening Verses of the Chapter regarding the glad tidings to the Noble Prophet (S) as to manifest triumph, completion of Favours, Guidance, and Succor, concerned and saddened by the incident of Hdaybiyya, some Muslims said unto the Noble Prophet (S):

"Good for you since you have been promised so many Divine Bounties. What will be granted to us?"

Thus the first Verse was revealed bearing glad tidings to believers that they would be granted great rewards.¹⁵ These Verses also treat of the Treaty of Hdaybiyya and its diverse reflections in people's thought and its fruitful consequences, specifying the fate of each group in the crucible of such ordeals.

The Verse opens by saying that another goal behind such great triumph was that believing men and women would be admitted the gardens of Paradise beneath whose trees rivers flow.

They shall abide in it for good and they shall never lose such great Favor;

("to abide therein forever").

Furthermore,

"He may expiate from them their sins and that is with Allah a supreme salvation and success."

Thus, against the four Favours bestowed upon the Messenger of God (S) in the manifest triumph, two great Favours were also granted to believers: everlasting Paradise with all its Bounties and forgiving of their faults besides serenity and peace of mind in this world. These three Favours constitute a great triumph and a grand salvation for those who pass the ordeals with flying flags.

In the Holy Qur'an, the word fawz is often collocated with 'adim and at times with mubin and kabir. In his Mufradat, Raghib says that fawz designates victory and attainment of good things together with health when it entails salvation in the Hereafter despite losing worldly bounties.

According to a well-known narration, upon receiving the blow on his head inflicted by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, the criminal of the time, Imam 'Ali's (as) shouted:

“By the God of Ka'ba I attained to triumph”

(and the letter of my happiness was signed with blood of my head).

Divine Ordeals are at times so difficult and unbearable that they uproot shallow faiths and turns hearts upside down; true believers enjoying the bounty of serenity may solely persevere and reap the consequences of their perseverance in the Hereafter and it is actually the great triumph.

Surah al-Fath - Verse 6

وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ
عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

6. And that He may chastise the hypocrites, men and women, and also the polytheist men and women who entertain evil thoughts about Allah [say that God will not support His Messenger (S)]. For them is a disgraceful torment, and the Wrath of Allah is upon them and He has cursed them and prepared Hell for them and worst indeed is that destination.

The Arabic phrase da'irat al-su' connotes unfavorable and far-reaching incident. 16 Following the treatment of the four Divine Favors bestowed upon the Noble Prophet (S) and believers in the preceding Verses, the blessed Verse in question includes threats against hypocrites and polytheists.

The torment of hypocrites and polytheists may not connote the torment in the Hereafter but it may refer to the torments and afflictions bred by hypocrisy and polytheism with which they were entangled following the Treaty of Hudaibiyya and the conquest of Mecca.

It is narrated that God Almighty shall never afflict any servant with torment following his repentance and asking God for forgiving his sins unless he entertains suspicion against Him and loses his hope of His Favor. Then the noble Imam recited the Verse in question. 17

“He may chastise the hypocrites, men and women, and also the polytheist men and women who entertain evil thoughts about Allah.”

Upon the departure of the Noble Prophet (S) and believers from Medina, hypocrites thought that they would never return safe and sound, as it is reflected in Verse 12 of the Chapter in question:

“Nay, but you thought that the Messenger (S) and the believers would never return to their families.”

The word da'ira literally designates occurrences and incidents, good and evil, happening to man, but it ad hoc is accompanied with the word su' (“bad, evil”) and connotes unfavorable incidents.

The other point is that:

“the Wrath of Allah is upon them and He has cursed them.”

The blessed Verse finally adds that God Almighty:

“prepared Hell for them and worst indeed is that destination.”

It is worthy of note that the majority of men were Muslim at Hudaibiyya and they were opposed by hypocrite and polytheist men, but the preceding Qur'anic Verses make mention of men and women in attainment to the great triumph and being afflicted with the excruciating torment.

reason is that the believing men appearing on the battleground may never succeed without being supported by believing women and likewise, hypocrite men may never attain to their goals without the support of hypocrite women.

Basically, the Islamic faith does not solely belong to men nor does it ignore women's characters and contributions; as a consequence of which whenever failing to mention women leads to exclusion of women, they are explicitly mentioned such that it becomes evident that the Islam faith belongs to humanity.

Surah al-Fath – Verse 7

وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزاً حَكِيماً

7. And to Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Ever Omnipotent, All-Wise.

God Almighty works through causes and ways.

The blessed Verse in question reiterates Divine Omnipotence and Greatness, saying:

“To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Ever Omnipotent, All-Wise.”

Reference to Divine Omnipotence was already mentioned when the preceding Verses treated of the exalted states and Favours bestowed upon believers. It is reiterated herein in treating of chastising hypocrites and polytheists in order to indicate that God Almighty whose Commands are followed by all the hosts of the heavens and the earth is Omnipotent everywhere.

Those worthy of enjoying His Mercy are at all times provided with the same and whenever He is Wrathful against any wrong doer, he may not flee the same. It is worthy of note that when mention is made of believers, Divine Attributes of Omniscience and Wisdom, consistent with His Mercy are mentioned, but treating of hypocrites and polytheists, His Attributes of Omnipotence and Wisdom, consistent with torment, are mentioned.

“The hosts of the heavens and the earth”

include hosts of angels and also those of lightning, earthquakes, tempests, torrents, sea waves, and also invisible forces lying beyond our knowledge since they all constitute Divine hosts and follow His Commands.

Surah al-Fath - Verses 8-9

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

8. Indeed, We have sent you as a witness [over deeds], as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner,

9. In order that you may believe in Allah and His Messenger and that you assist and honor him and that you glorify [His] praises morning and evening.

The Arabic verbal form tu’azziruhu derives from ‘azara (“keep from”) connoting that the Noble Prophet (S) should be preserved from any harm or harassment. The word shahid (“witness”) may refer to a perfect model. Applied to the Noble Prophet (S), the word indicates that he is the perfect model for humanity.

The verbal forms tu’azziruhu and tuwaqqiruhu (“honor him”) may refer to God Almighty, i.e. assist and

honor Him. It may also refer to the Noble Prophet (S) and it is to be noted that honoring him is honoring God Almighty.

Verse 8 is addressed to the Noble Prophet (S) saying unto him that God Almighty sent him on the Prophetic mission such that he serves as a witness for people confirming the words of true believers and reject those uttered by hypocrites.

It is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an that:

“The Messenger is a witness over them.”

It may also refer to the Noble Prophet's (S) spiritual state implying that he attained to such intuitive knowledge that he may perceive through the eyes of his head and heart that he may bear glad tidings to believers that they shall enjoy Divine Mercy and elevated states in Paradise and he may warn disbelievers and polytheists against torments in Hell as the consequences of their polytheism and disbelieve such that he may impart the final argument to people and help them purify their souls.

Verse 9 is saying that thus he may show unto people the Path of Guidance so that through their intellect, they may believe in God Almighty and His Messenger (S), assist the True Religion, defeat disbelievers, and glorify God Almighty as a token of obedience to Him in the morning and in the evening. The Arabic words bukra and asil designate morning and evening and may also refer to the prayers established at these times.

It is worthy of note that five significant injunctions are being mentioned as the causes and goals of the preceding attributes of the Noble Prophet (S).

Two injunctions concern obedience to God Almighty and glorifying Him and three Injunctions are related to obeying, defending, and honoring the elevated state of the Noble Prophet (S), saying that the goal of the Prophetic Call is that people believe in God Almighty and His Messenger (S), defend him against enemies, honor him, and glorify God Almighty in the morning and in the evening.

Surah al-Fath - Verse 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ
عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمِنَّا فَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمِنَّا فَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمِنَّا فَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمِنَّا

10. Indeed, those who give pledge to you, they are giving pledge to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands. Then whosoever breaks his pledge breaks it only to his own harm and whosoever fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah, He will bestow on him a great reward.

Muslim leaders are supposed to lay emphasis in critical circumstances and require their adherents to pledge allegiance once again.

God Almighty is in need of no one, thus man should abstain from unfaithfulness since Divine Might is superior to everyone else. In this blessed Verse, God Almighty addresses His friend, the Noble Prophet (S), saying unto him that those who pledge their allegiance with you have in fact sworn allegiance with Him, since Divine Omnipotence far exceeds people's might and those who have broken their allegiance have in fact broken their own character and have denigrated himself.

Au contraire, those who stand loyal to the pledge sworn with God Almighty through the Noble Prophet (S) and act upon their duties shall soon receive great Divine Rewards.

The Arabic word bay'a derives from b-y-' designating purchase and exchange.

The Verse is saying that one who swears a pledge with the Noble Prophet (S), it is as if he has entered into some transaction with God Almighty;

("Indeed, Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their property for that theirs shall be the Paradise,"18).

God Almighty has purchased believers' lives and possessions at the price of Paradise, since swearing allegiance with the Messenger of God (S) is on a par with pledging allegiance with God Almighty.

"The Hand of Allah is over their hands"

refers to the fact that God Almighty regards the His Messenger's (S) hand like that of His own. In other words, the Noble Prophet's (S)'s hand at the time of pledging allegiance with him is actually His Hand, since His Messenger's (S) hand symbolizes that of God Almighty.

The blessed Verse reveals that swearing allegiance with the Noble Prophet (S) is in fact giving pledge to God Almighty, i.e. if God Almighty had Hands, He would regard the Noble Prophet's (S) hands like His own and giving pledge to him is in fact giving pledge to God Almighty.

The blessed Verse reflects the Noble Prophet's (S) closeness to God Almighty so that believers know that their allegiance with the Noble Prophet (S) stands precisely on a par with their allegiance with God Almighty, since the Noble Prophet (S) has attained to such elevated state of nearness to Him that he annihilated his self and has found everlastingness in Truth. Thus, his word and act stand on a par with those of God Almighty.

Surah al-Fath - Verse 11

سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا يَقُولُونَ
بِالْسِّنَتِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا
أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

11. Those of the Bedouin who lagged behind [in jihad] will say unto you [in order to justify their transgressions]: “Our possessions and our families preoccupied us, so ask forgiveness for us.” They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: “Who then has any power at all [to intervene] on your behalf with Allah, if He intends you harm or intends you benefit? Nay, but Allah is Ever All-Aware of what you do.

The Arabic word ‘arab is ad hoc applied to anti-social and uncultured Bedouin. Unrefined people tend to show weakness in participating in jihad. Leaders are supposed to be forward-looking, predict the words and intrigues of opponents and hypocrites and think of appropriate reactions.

The blessed Verse in question is informing the Noble Prophet (S) that the Arabs who disobeyed his orders would apologize to him. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas and Mujahid narrate that when the Noble Prophet (S) intended to depart for Mecca for performing ‘umra pilgrimage together with a number of his companions.

Thus he summoned the Arabs living in the vicinity of Mecca bidding them to accompany him so that if the Quraysh engaged in fight with Muslims, they could render them aid. They thought that the Quraysh could defeat Muhammad (S) and his followers and they could lose their lives so they declined the Noble Prophet’s (S) request.

It was for this occasion that the blessed Verse in question was revealed informing the Noble Prophet (S) that the Arabs who failed to keep their loyalty to him following the Treaty of Hudaibiyya and pledging allegiance with him would come to him to express their apologies saying that their possessions and families preoccupied them and kept them from accompanying him.

Then they implored the Noble Prophet (S) to ask God Almighty for their forgiveness. They were hypocrites and what they uttered was not from their hearts. The blessed Verse in saying unto the Noble Prophet (S) that he needs to ask them if God Almighty intends to make them accrue benefits or harms who possesses the might to intervene on your behalf. God is All-Aware of what they do, their hypocrisy and lies. He is Omniscient of all outward and concealed affairs.

Surah al-Fath - Verses 12-13

بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

وَضَنَّتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوِّءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا

12. “Nay, but [your disobedience and flight was because] you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return [safe and sound] to their families and that was made fair-seeming in your hearts and you did entertain an evil thought and you became a vain people going for perdition.”

13. And whosoever does not believe in Allah and His Messenger, then truly, We have prepared for disbelievers a blazing Fire.

The Arabic word bur designates bankruptcy, disgrace, and perdition. Some deeds are evil by human natural disposition, but Satan and Concupiscence make them seem fair to man so that he may commit them. Those Arabs who had turned away from jihad thought that Muslims would all be defeated and killed; consequently, fear, meanness, deprivation, and disgrace fell into their share.

The blessed Verses in question address those Arabs saying unto them that they entertained suspicion and doubt imagining that the Messenger of Allah (S) and believers who accompanied him at Hudaibiyya would never return to Medina as they would be destroyed by the Quraysh. Satan made such evil thought seem fair to them.

“They entertained an evil thought and became a vain people going for perdition.”

Consequently, they were deprived of embarking upon that historic journey, the pledge of the tree, and other honors. It entailed such disgrace, perdition, and excruciating torment in the Hereafter.

Their hearts were dead as a consequence of which such dire fate was in store for them. Since such wrong acts sprang at times from faithlessness, Verse 13 is saying that:

“Whosoever does not believe in Allah and His Messenger (S), then truly, We have prepared for disbelievers a blazing Fire.”

Surah al-Fath – Verse 14

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَّحِيمًا

14. And to Allah belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills [and deems it appropriate] and punishes whom He wills [and deems it befitting]. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

There are some instances when God Almighty says:

“Allah forgives whom He wills and chastises whom He wills.”

Taking into account Divine Justice and Wisdom, it may be said that man makes himself worthy of receiving

Divine Forgiving and Mercy and at times he makes himself unworthy of such Divine Forgiving and Mercy and accrues Divine Wrath and torment. Divine Forgiving precedes His Chastisement which indicates that the former precedes the latter.

The Arabic word sa'ir (“blazing fire”) indicates that for those who fail to believe in God Almighty and His Messenger (S) is prepared a blazing fire, namely Hell.

The verbal form a'tadna (“we have prepared”) and the contextual meaning of other related Verses demonstrate that Hell and Paradise exist in their places and whose gates are closed to us so long as we live but they shall be opened upon our death rather than as some have imagined will be created in the Hereafter.

It is worthy of note that Forgiving precedes torment. The close of the blessed Verse lays further emphasis on Divine Forgiving and Mercy, since these threats and warnings aim at educating people which necessitates that the path of return be open to sinners and even disbelievers; particularly owing to the point that most of such wrong deeds spring from ignorance.

Such ignorant people are supposed to be encouraged to ask for Divine Forgiving so that they may turn to the Straight Path and proceed toward belief in God Almighty and His Messenger (S).

Surah al-Fath - Verse 15

سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَى مَغَانِمٍ لِتَأْخُذُوهَا ذَرُونَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ
يَبْدِلُوا كَلَامَ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا
بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

15. Those who lagged behind [at Hdaybiyya] will say, when you set forth to take the spoils [of Khaybar], “Allow us to follow you.” They want to change Allah’s Words [to the effect that those

other than the companions of Hudaibiyya were not supposed to participate at Khaybar]. Say [unto them]: “You shall not follow us. Thus Allah has said [about you] in advance.” Then they will say: “Nay, you envy us [and do not want us to benefit from the spoils which is not true].” Nay, but they understand not except a little.

The majority of Qur’anic exegetes maintain that these blessed Verses treat of the conquest of Khaybar occurring in 7 AH/627, one year following the Treaty of Hudaibiyya.

It is worthy of note that according to traditions, it was upon the Noble Prophet’s (S) return from Hudaibiyya that by Divine Command he bore glad tidings to those participating at Hudaibiyya that Muslims would conquer Khaybar and specified that they were solely supposed to participate at the battle of Khaybar; as a consequence of which they rather than those lagging behind, could have war spoils.

However, when these timid mammonists noticed that the Noble Prophet (S) shall definitely be triumphant at the prospective war and many spoils shall fall into the share of the army of Muslims took the opportunity to come to him asking for permission to take part in the battle of Khaybar.

They resorted to the apology that they intended to compensate for their past faults, repent of their sins, and serve the cause of the Islamic faith and the Holy Qur’an with sincerity! They were ignorant of the revelation of the Qur’anic Verses that disclosed their secret intentions:

“Those who lagged behind [at Hudaibiyya] will say, when you set forth to take the spoils [of Khaybar], ‘Allow us to follow you.’ They want to change Allah’s Words [to the effect that those other than the companions of Hudaibiyya were not supposed to participate at Khaybar].”

It may be noted that in other instances such avaricious, indolent, and self-indulgent people fled hardships and perils and aimed at accruing mammons which entailed less hardships.

At any rate, the blessed Qur’anic Verses in question provides an answer to these opportunists:

“They want to change Allah’s Words.”

Then, it is further added:

“You shall not follow us.”

It is not what the Noble Prophet (S) says of his own, but

“Thus Allah has said [about you] in advance”

informing Muslims of your future deeds. It is Divine Command that the spoils of Khaybar shall fall into the share of the companions of Hudaibiyya and others are not supposed to accompany them in this respect.

It is worthy of note that such shameless defectors persist in their false claims and accuse Muslims of entertaining envy;

“Then they will say: “Nay, you envy us.”

Thus, they even impliedly refute the Noble Prophet’s (S) words, claiming that they enviously impede them from taking part in the battle of Khaybar!

The blessed Verse closes thus:

“Nay, but they understand not except a little.”

Their misfortunes spring from their ignorance regarding God Almighty, the elevated state of His Messenger (S), man’s fate, and transience of worldly possessions. It is true that they were clever and precise in financial matters and personal gains, but they were too ignorant to exchange whatever they had with transient mammons.

Finally, the Noble Prophet (S), as per historical accounts, distributed the spoils of the battle of Khaybar amongst the companions of Hudaibiyya, even the person present at Khaybar who failed to participate in the battle of Khaybar, received a share. He is no one but Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah Ansari. 19

Surah al-Fath – Verse 16

قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سُدْعُونَ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِ آبَائِهِمْ بِأَسْ شَدِيدٍ تَقَاتُلُونَهُمْ أَوْ
يُسَلِّمُونَ فَإِنْ تَطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ
يُعَذِّبُكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

16. Say unto the Bedouin who lagged behind: “You shall be called [soon] to fight against a people given to great warfare, then you shall fight them, or they shall convert to Islam. Then if you obey [and embrace the Prophetic Call], Allah will give you a fair reward; but if you turn away as you did turn away before, He will chastise you with a painful torment.”

We are supposed to leave the path of return open to defectors without depriving them of the same for good. Muslims are supposed to possess such military means and might that they be able to defeat their mighty enemies and make them surrender;

“You shall be called [soon] to fight against a people given to great warfare, then you shall fight them, or they shall convert to Islam.”

People reveal their inward secrets, sincerity, and hypocrisy in battleground.

In this blessed Verse, God Almighty says unto His Messenger (S):

“O Muhammad (S)! Say unto those Arabs who disobeyed the Messenger’s (S) command and failed to accompany believers at Hudaibiyya and then offered their apologies and intended to participate at the battle of Khaybar with believers in order to have a share of spoils.

“You shall be called [soon] to fight against a mighty and bold. You need to confront them in battle so that they convert to the Islamic faith or surrender. If you Arabs obey Divine Commands and fight for Allah’s cause, He will grant you fair reward, but if you turn away from departing for Mecca, as you did earlier, you will be chastised by God Almighty with excruciating torment. Now, who were these mighty warriors referred to in the blessed Verse in question?”

The sentence:

“You shall fight them or they shall convert to Islam”

demonstrates that they were not people of the Book, since they could not be required to embrace the Islamic faith as they are free to choose between conversion to the Islamic faith or recognition of the conditions of paying tribute to the Islamic state and living under the protection of Islamic rule through peaceful coexistence with Muslims.

Only polytheists and idolaters have to convert to the Islamic faith, since Islam does not recognize idolatry as a religion and it is permitted to force idolaters to forgo idolatry.

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1. Majma’ al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 108.
 2. Thawab al-A’mal, apud Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 46.
 3. Majma’ al-Bayan, loc. cit.
 4. 44:13
 5. 15:1
 6. 16:103
 7. 7:184
 8. 48:1
 9. 33:36
 10. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn.
 11. 5:3
 12. 3:151
 13. 33:39
 14. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 165.
 15. Tafsir Maraghi, vol. 26, p. 85; Tafsir Abu al-Futuh Razi, vol. 10, p. 26; Tafsir Ruh al-Ma’ani, vol. 26, p. 86.
 16. Raghib’s Mufradat.
 17. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 399.
 18. 9:112
 19. Ibn Hisham’s Sira, vol. 3, p. 364.

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