

Surah al-Tahrim, Chapter 66

(The Proscription)

Section (juz') 28

Number of Verses: 12

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The blessed Chapter, revealed in Medina, has twelve Verses and its designation derives from the first blessed Verse in which God Almighty censures the proscription of what is religiously lawful, even though such proscription, owing to different individual and social reasons, deprives man of certain lawful pleasures.

The opening Verses treat of the Noble Prophet's mistreatment by some of his wives and the following Verses, addressed to the believers, enjoin them to take precaution as to treating and fostering their families so that Hellfire may not be in store for them.

The blessed Chapter proceeds to make references to women's merits and demerits and thereby depicts the women possessing such traits. The wives of Noah and Lot are presented as possessing demerits and that of the Pharaoh and Mary (as) are suggested as those possessing merits.

The Merit of Reciting the Chapter

According to a Prophetic tradition, one who recites the Chapter will be granted the Divine Reward of sincere repentance. 1

Surah al-Tahrim – Verses 1-2

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

- 1. O Prophet! Why do you forbid that which Allah has made lawful to you, seeking to please your wives? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Gracious.**
- 2. Allah has already ordained for you the absolution from your oaths. And Allah is your Guardian and He is the Omniscient, the All-Wise.**

Different occasions of Revelation have been mentioned for the first blessed Verse, though it is certain that the Noble Prophet (S) had different wives and at times he was entangled with their envious conducts and waived his lawful rights in order to please all of them.

Although such proscriptions were personal matters, but as the Noble Prophet has been the role model of the society, the possibility exists that others may feel that it is a religious decree and they have to act upon it. Thus, God Almighty warns His Prophet (S) against it and in fact makes people understand that such conducts were the Noble Prophet's (S) personal affairs they are not supposed to be regarded as standards for others.

It is incumbent upon us to bear in mind to prioritize our affairs. Acting upon one's oaths bears significance, but acting upon religious decrees bears further significance. An eminent figure like the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) does not solely belong to himself, but he belongs to the Muslim society in its entirety and to the world of humanity.

Therefore, even though certain plots, however insignificant, be hatched against him, are not to be neglected as his prestige is not supposed to be taken lightly and such plots should be dealt with seriously and decisively. The opening Verses of the blessed Chapter in question reflect the Divine

Decisiveness against such incidents threatening His Messenger's (S) prestige.

Addressed to His Messenger (S), God Almighty is asking him why he deprives himself of something made lawful by Him for the sake of his wives' satisfaction. It goes without saying that such proscription was not a religiously ordained one, but as it is reflected in the following blessed Verses, it was an oath taken by the Noble Prophet (S).

It is common knowledge that taking oaths as to refraining from certain acts does not entail any sin. Thus, the clause "why do you forbid" does not reflect censure, but it indicates compassion.

For instance, in common parlance, addressed to one who works hard to earn a living, his is asked:

"Why do you not deservedly benefit from your numerous troubles?"

The blessed Verse closes with saying that God Almighty is Oft-Forgiving and Most Compassionate. Such Forgiving and Compassion are addressed to the wives who paved the path for the occurrence of the incident saying that if they sincerely repent from their sins, they will be forgiven.

It may also reflect that the Noble Prophet (S) should not have taken such oath which may serve as a pretext for some of his wives to take liberties.

The second blessed Verse further adds:

"Allah has already ordained for you the absolution from your oaths"

in such circumstances through making atonements. It is worthy of note, however, that in case the oath has been taken as to preferable refraining from committing certain acts, the oath should be acted upon and breaking it entails committing sins for which atonements are to be made.

But, in case the oath concerns committing acts from which refraining is preferable, as reflected in the blessed Verse in question, it is permissible to break it, though in order to respect the oath taken, it would be better to make atonements.

The blessed Verse 2 proceeds to say

"Allah is your Guardian and He is the Omniscient, the All-Wise"

and has thereby solved your problem. According to traditions, following the Revelation of the blessed Verse, the Noble Prophet made lawful to himself what he had already rendered unlawful though the manumission of a slave.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verses 3-4

وَإِذْ أَسْرَ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنِ بَعْضٍ ۗ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَأَكَ هَذَا ۗ قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

إِنْ تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا ۗ وَإِنْ تَظَاهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ

3. Remember when the Prophet disclosed a secret of to one of his wives, then she divulged it and Allah made it known to him. He informed him of a part thereof and left the other part. When the Prophet told let his wife know of it, she asked: "Who told you this secret?" He replied: "The Omniscient, the All-Aware Allah apprised me of it."

4. If you two turn in repentance to Allah, it will be better for you, since your hearts have turned away from the truth, but if you conspire against him, you may not achieve anything. Then, verily Allah is his Protector and Gabriel and the righteous believers,2 and furthermore, the angels are his helpers.

The blessed Verses provide further details as to the narrative saying:

"Remember when the Prophet (S) disclosed a secret of his to some of his wives, but she failed to keep the secret and divulged it. God Almighty apprised His Messenger (S) of such disclosure and he apprised his wife of some of the intelligence and refrained from informing her of the rest."

Now, what was the secret of which some of his wives were apprised? As mentioned above regarding the occasion of the Revelation, the secret consisted of two points, firstly eating honey before his wife Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh and secondly prohibiting himself from eating honey in future. The wife who divulged the secret was Hafsa who upon being informed of the secret, she divulged the secret to 'À'isha.

Upon being apprised of the disclosure of the secret through Divine Revelation, he informed Hafsa of some of it but refrained from informing her of it all to prevent her from being ashamed. The first part might have consisted of eating honey and the second part might have consisted of the prohibition as per which he refrained from eating honey in future.

At any rate, upon informing Hafsa of the disclosure of the secret, she inquired about the source of intelligence. He replied that God Almighty, the All-Wise, had informed him of the disclosure.

The blessed Verse in question reflect that some of the wives of the Noble Prophet (S) disturbed him by their words; further, they lacked the merit of keeping secrets which is one of the qualifications of a loyal wife.

Au contraire, the Noble Prophet's (S) conduct was so magnanimous that he even did not apprise her of the whole intelligence, but merely alluded to some part of it.

In this vein, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), as saying:

"Magnanimous people never to the extreme in obtaining their own rights, since God Almighty says that the Noble Prophet (S) apprised her of some of the intelligence and refrained from informing her of its entirety.³

Addressed to the two wives who had conspired in the above mentioned plot, the blessed Verse 4 is saying:

"If you repent and refrain from hurting the Noble Prophet (S), it will be better for you, since by doing such act, your hearts have turned away from truth and have become impure by committing sins."

All Shi'i and Sunni exegetes are unanimous in maintaining that Hafsa and 'A'isha, the daughters of 'Umar and Abu Bakr respectively, are hereby intended.

The Arabic verbal form

saghat ("***inclined***"),

deriving from the root s-gh-w/s-gh-y ("incline, bend"), designates inclination and tending toward something. In Arabic, it is said: "saghat al-nujum" meaning: "the stars inclined toward the west."

The verbal noun isgha' denotes eaves dropping and listening to other people's words furtively. The clause saghat qulubukum connotes that their hearts turned away from the truth and inclined toward committing sins.

The blessed Verse further adds that if you two conspire against him, i.e. the Noble Prophet (S), you may not achieve anything, since God Almighty is his Protector and Aid and also Gabriel, the righteous believers, and angels are also his helpers.

The blessed Verse reflects that the incident adversely affected the Noble Prophet's (S) pure heart and his magnanimous soul such that God Almighty defended him and although Allah is Omnipotent, but it is proclaimed that Gabriel, the righteous believers, and angels were his helpers.

It is worthy of note that as recorded in Sahih Bukhari, it is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas that the latter asked ‘Umar concerning the identity of the Noble Prophet’s (S) wives who had conspired against him.

‘Umar replied:

*"By God Almighty we did not accord any attention toward women till God Almighty revealed some Verses regarding them and set out some rights for them and thereby they take liberties."*⁴

The same theme is to be found in Tafsir Durr al–Manthur in a detailed tradition narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas as per which ‘Umar said that he had been informed of the incident that the Noble Prophet (S) had turned away from all his wives and he was residing in a place named Mashraba Umm Ibrahim.

I went to him and inquired:

"O Allah’s Messenger! Have you divorced your wives?"

He replied:

"No."

I further inquired:

"God is the Greatest! We, the Qurayshis, have been always dominating our wives, but when we came to Medina, we noticed that the Medinan women have the upper hand and our wives learned it from them. Once my wife quarreled with me and I regarded her act surprising and obnoxious."

She asked:

"Why are you surprised? By Allah the Noble Prophet’s (S) wives treat him likewise and at times they fail to be on speaking terms with him."

‘Umar said:

*"I enjoined my daughter, Hafsa, to refrain from doing so and further added that if your neighbor, namely ‘À’isha, acts similarly, you should not do so as her conditions are different from yours."*⁵

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 5

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكَ مَسْلَمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَانِتَاتٍ
تَأْتِيَاتٍ عَابِدَاتٍ سَائِحَاتٍ ثِيْبَاتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا

5. It may be that if he divorced you, his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you, Muslims, believers, humble, repentant, worshipping Allah sincerely, inclined toward emigration, previously married and virgin.

The blessed Verse enumerates six good qualities for good wives which may serve as models for all the Muslims while they intend to ask the hands of women in marriage. Such qualities as enumerated in the blessed Verse deserve attention.

Addressed to all the Noble Prophet's (S) wives, the blessed Verse in question is saying in a tone tinged with warning that if he divorces you, God Almighty will provide him with better wives who will be Muslim, believing, humble, repentant, worshipping God Almighty, obedient to Allah from amongst virgins and those previously married.

Thus, they are warned that they should not take it for granted that the Noble Prophet (S) would never divorce them and that if he divorces them, better wives will not replace them. They are enjoined to desist from conspiring against him, quarreling with him, and hurting him, or else they shall be deprived of the glory of being married to the Noble Prophet (S) and better and further meritorious women shall replace them.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

6. O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire whose fuel is men and stones, over which are appointed guarding angels, stern and severe, who disobey not from executing the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded.

Following the censures and warnings to some of the Noble Prophet's (S) wives reflected in the preceding Verses, the blessed Verse in question proceeds to address all the believers enjoining them to strive toward fostering and educating their families saying:

"O you who believe! Preserve yourselves against the Fire whose fuel is mankind and stones."

Such preservation connotes refraining from committing sins and resistance against concupiscent desires. Preservation of one's family indicates fostering and educating them, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, preparing a pure family environment.

Such plan is supposed to begin from making preparations for marriage and be pursued upon the birth of

the first child. Such plan is to be acted upon through all the stages by precise and accurate planning. In other words, giving what is due to one's wife and children is not restricted to providing them with accommodation and sustenance, but helping them with gaining spiritual growth through accurate education bears further significance.

It is worthy of note that the Arabic imperative form

qu ("***preserve, keep***")

reflects that if you leave them on their own, they will proceed toward the Fire and it is incumbent upon you to preserve them from ending upon in Hell. The Arabic nominal form waqud denotes fuel or something flammable like firewood.

Thus, Hellfire is not like the fire in this world, since its flames rise up from the inward of human beings and stones. Some exegetes maintain that by stones, sulfuric stones are hereby intended, though the word hijara reflects a general denotation designating of all kinds of stone.

Today, we know that each piece of stone is comprised of billions of atoms and if the force preserved in them happen to be liberated, they make such huge fire that man will be surprised at it. Some Qur'an exegetes maintain that the word "stones" herein connotes the stone idols worshipped by polytheists.

The blessed Verse proceeds to say that strict and severe angels are appointed to tend the Fire and they never disobey Allah's Command but they act upon the Commands of God Almighty unquestioningly. There shall be no way out of the Fire nor shall crying and beseeching be of any effect.

It goes without saying that whoever is appointed to some task is required to possess the suitable qualifications. Thus, the angels appointed to inflicting torments are to be naturally severe and rough, since Hell is not a place where one may expect compassion. It is the crucible of Divine Wrath. Nonetheless, such angels shall never transgress the bounds of justice but they merely act upon Divine Command without making any alterations in it.

It is narrated in a tradition that upon the Revelation of the blessed Verse in question, a certain Companion of the Noble Prophet (S) inquired:

"How may I preserve my family from Hellfire?"

the Noble Prophet (S) replied:

*"Through enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. If they acknowledge your suggestions and act accordingly, you will preserve them from Hellfire. However, if they fail to act likewise, you have acted upon your obligations."*⁶

According to another comprehensive and interesting tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) is reported as

saying:

*"Know that you are all guardians responsible for those whom you are appointed to guard. The leader of the Islamic community is the guardian of the people and is responsible for all of them. Men are the guardians of their families for whom they are responsible. Women are also the guardians of their husbands and children for whom they stand answerable. Know that you are all guardians responsible for all those under your guardianship."*⁷

It is also narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) as saying:

*"Divine Mercy shall be upon those who enjoin their families to attend to the establishment of ritual prayers, fasting, paying the religious tax, and care for the poor, the orphans, and the neighbors, distancing from committing sins."*⁸

It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an⁹ that the Noble Prophet (S) enjoined his family to establish ritual prayers. According to a tradition, upon hearing the blessed Verse in question, a young man lost consciousness and passed away.

The Noble Prophet (S) promised him that he will be admitted to Paradise quoting the Qur'anic Verse¹⁰:

"And verily, We shall make you dwell in the land after him. This is for him who fears standing before Me [on the Day of Resurrection and fears My Chastisement] and also fears My Warning."

He also recited another Qur'anic Verse¹¹:

"And enjoin your family to establish ritual prayers and be patient in offering them. We ask not of you a provision: We provide for you. And the good end is in store for the God fearing."

The discussion may be crowned by quoting a tradition narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), as per which:

*"The blessed Verse [in question] is enjoining the believing to teach their families to do righteous good deeds."*¹²

It is worthy of note, however, that if someone committed a mistake, he may at any time turn to God Almighty in repentance and Divine Graciousness shall be bestowed upon him.

Turning to God Almighty in repentance is one of the quite significant principles of education in Islam. All sinners are enjoined to repent from their sins so that they may compensate for their wrong deeds and attain to spiritual growth.

In this vein, Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn in the supplications of the repentant says:

"My Lord! You have opened the door of forgiveness to your servants and called it repentance enjoining

them to turn toward you in repentance sincerely rather than simply verbally. What is the pretext of those who neglect from entry following the opening of the door?"¹³

Numerous traditions have been narrated and many Qur'anic Verses have been revealed in this respect which are to be found in the Holy Qur'an and tradition sources.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۚ إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

7. [It will be said unto disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection:] O you who disbelieve! Make no excuses on this Day, since you are being requited only for your deeds.

The blessed Verse includes the only instance in which disbelievers are being addressed and the blessed concerns the Day of Resurrection. Disbelief is not pardonable on the Day of Resurrection and the disbelievers' repentance shall be of no avail on that Day.

Obstinacy and prejudice against logic, preaching, and miracles are not excusable as a consequence of which the disbelievers are herein addressed saying:

"O you who disbelieve! Make no excuses on this Day, since you are being requited only for your deeds."

The blessed Verse in question follows the one in which believers were addressed which reflects that if you fail to be attentive toward your families you may be addressed thus on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, emphasis is laid on the point that sinners shall be requited for their deeds on the Day of Resurrection.

The point mentioned in the preceding blessed Verse as per which flames of Hellfire shall rise from the inward of men further substantiates it. It is also worthy of note that not accepting their excuses on the Day of Resurrection is owing to the fact that making excuses is a kind of repentance which is only possible in this world rather than the Hereafter when they will be admitted to Hell. At any rate, human deeds shall be requited on the Day of Resurrection.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 8

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

مَعَهُ ۚ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

8. O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will expiate from you your sins and admit you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow – the Day that Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believe in him. Their Light will run forward before them and in their right hands. They will say: "Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us and grant us forgiveness. Verily, You are Able to do all things.

The preceding Verses treated of Hellfire, though the blessed Verse in questions deals with light. The preceding Verses treated of taking precautions, but the blessed Verse in question deals with cure, saying that now that you failed to refrain from committing sins, you may turn toward God Almighty in repentance lest you may despair.

The blessed Verse actually shows the true path toward deliverance from Hellfire, saying:

"O you who believe! Turn toward God Almighty in repentance sincerely."

The first step to be taken toward deliverance is to repent from committing sins and such repentance is to be sincere from all aspects. The motive behind such repentance should be obedience to Divine Command and fear of committing sins rather than mere fear of the social and worldly consequence of committing vices. Such repentance separates man from committing sins at all times those who sincerely repent will never turn away from the true path.

It is well-known that repentance is to regret having committed sins and one is required to make up his mind not to commit further sins in future. Such person is supposed to compensate for the losses stemming from committing sins.

Thus the pillars of repentance may be summarized in five things: refraining from committing sins, regret, deciding to refrain from committing further sins in future, compensation for the losses within one's capacity, and uttering the formula of repentance (istighfar).

The Arabic nominal form *nasuh*, deriving from the root n-s-h, literally denotes sincere benevolence and since true benevolence should be accompanied by steadfastness, the word *nush* is at times employed in this sense.

Different interpretations have been suggested concerning the meaning of the word *nasuh* such that the number of such interpretations is mentioned to be twenty three.¹⁴ However, all these interpretations almost share one single core and the peripheral issues surrounding it.

For instance, it is said that sincere repentance (*tawba nasuh*) has four qualifications: sincere regret,

verbal repentance, refraining from committing sins, and deciding to refrain from committing sins in future.

Some maintain that sincere repentance is obtained when the repentant person bears his sins in his mind at all times and repents from having committed them.

Some others hold that sincere repentance implies the compensation of the losses incurred to others owing to having committed sins and asking forgiveness from the victims of the sins and the repentant person is supposed to be steadfast in his obedience to God Almighty.

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) that Mu'adh ibn Jabal inquired about sincere repentance and the Noble Prophet replied:

"Sincere repentance implies that the repentant person may never turn toward committing sins any longer, such that milk never returns to the breast."¹⁵

Such delicate expression reflects that sincere repentance engenders such drastic change in man that the way of returning to the past is totally blocked for him in such manner that milk may never return to the breast. Such theme, attested in other traditions, reflects the exalted state of sincere repentance, since return is possible in lower degrees of repentance. Steadfastness in repentance finally leads to permanent refraining from committing sins.

The blessed Verse proceeds to make reference to the tokens of such sincere repentance, saying:

"It may be that your Lord will expiate from you your sins and admit you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow – the Day that Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believe in him."

The point is that the light of their faith and righteous good deeds runs forward as well as on their right thus shedding light on the Plain of Judgment and opens their way onto Paradise.

Then, they will turn toward God Almighty, saying:

"Make our light perfect and forgive us as you are the Omnipotent Lord."

Such sincere repentance entails five great consequences: forgiving of the sins, being admitted to the Bountiful Paradise, disgracing of the evil doing liars since on that Day the Noble Prophet (S) and the believers shall be honorable as what they used to say shall be realized, the light of their faith and righteous good deeds will run forward as well as on their right side thus leading them onto brilliant Paradise, and they will be further attentive toward God Almighty as a consequence of which they turn toward Divine Threshold invoking Him to make their light perfect and forgive all their sins.

Finally, repentance is the door leading to Divine Graciousness. It happens many a time that many, particularly when beginning his spiritual growth and treading the Path leading to God Almighty, commits

mistakes.

However, if the return toward the Truth is blocked, he will despair and fails to further tread the path. Thus, the path toward Divine Graciousness and repentance is always open to him.

It is worthy of note, however, that repentance does not solely imply verbal repentance and uttering its formula, but there are certain requirements of which mention was made in the exegesis of the sincere repentance in the preceding blessed Verses. Acting upon such requirements leads to the purification of the soul from sins.

In this vein, it is narrated from Imam Baqir (as) that whoever repents from committing sins is like one who has not committed any sin and one who continues to commit sins while he is uttering the formula of repentance is like one who derides repentance. 16

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) on the authority of Imam Ridha (as) that

*"A believer is like an archangel and before God Almighty, the believer is truly higher than angels in rank. Nothing is more lovable before God Almighty than the repentance of the believing men and women."*17

In this vein, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), as saying:

*"No support is better than repentance."*18

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) as saying:

*"Nothing is more lovable before God Almighty than the believing men and women who regret from having committed sins and repent of them."*19

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) on the authority of Abu Basir that when a man commits a sin, a black spot appears in his heart. If he repents, the spot will be removed, but if he commits further sins, the black spot grows such that it clouds all his heart and he may never attain salvation.20 Numerous traditions have been reported on repentance for which tradition sources may be consulted.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 9

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

9. O Prophet! Struggle hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be severe against them. Their abode will be Hell and worst is that abode.

The Islamic faith is comprehensive and reflects compassion and severity in their proper places. The point is that disbelief and hypocrisy lead man to a state in which the compassionate Prophet (S) and censures him.

Since hypocrites were indubitably gladdened by the disclosure of his domestic secrets and the quarrels amongst his wives as mentioned above in the preceding Verses and even fanned the flames of the rumors, the blessed Verse in question includes severe Injunctions against their vices, saying:

"O Prophet! Struggle hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be severe against them. Their abode will be Hell and worst is that abode."

Such jihad against the disbelievers may emerge in the forms of armed and unarmed struggles, though the struggle against hypocrites is indubitably unarmed, since it is quite unprecedented in the histories of the Islam.

Thus, it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

"Allah's Messenger never waged war against hypocrites, but he strove at all times to soften their hearts."²¹

Therefore, struggling against them implies censure, warning, threatening, disgracing and at times softening their hearts, since jihad encompasses a broad semantic scope embracing any kind of struggling and striving toward the fulfillment of goals.

The imperative form wa 'ghluth 'alayhim literally denoting

"be severe against them"

reflects severity in words, disclosure of their secrets, warning them against their hypocrisy, and the like. Such particular stance against the hypocrites who posed the most perilous threat against the Islamic faith was owing to the fact that they claimed to be Muslims and associated with the Muslims as a consequence of which they could not be treated like disbelievers.²²

Such policy was taken as long as they do not take arms against Muslims as if they embarked upon armed struggle against Muslims, they were treated likewise since they were termed as 'belligerent' (muharib).

Although the hypocrites did not take up arms in the Noble Prophet's (S) lifetime, but after his sad demise, particularly under the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), they took up arms against Muslims and the Noble Imam embarked upon waging war against them.

Some have said that jihad against the hypocrites attested in the blessed Verse in question connotes their being chastised according to the religious law, since those who were chastised were hypocrites.

Nonetheless, the majority of Qur'an exegetes have opted for the former exegesis. It is worthy of note, however, that the blessed Verse is exactly reiterated elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an²³.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 10

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَتَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَتَ لُوطٍ ۗ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحِينَ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّٰخِلِينَ

10. Allah has set forth a example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Noah and that of Lot. They were under two of our righteous servants, but they both betrayed them. So their relationships with the two Prophets availed them not against Allah's torment and it was said unto them: "Enter the Fire along with those who enter!"

Women may serve as role models of righteousness or corruption in history. Thus, the blessed Verse once more addresses the story of the Noble Prophet's (S) wives and in order to provide them with practical lessons, mention is made of the dire fates of the two women who lived with the two eminent Messengers of Allah (as). Reference is also herein made of the fate of two believing and sacrificing women one of whom lived with one of the most tyrannical figures in history.

The blessed Verse opens with saying that God Almighty has set forth a example for the disbelieving, namely the wives of Prophets Noah (as) and Lot (as) who lived with two righteous servants of God Almighty, but they betrayed them. The point is that their relationships with the two eminent Prophets (as) were of no avail against Divine torments.

It was said unto them:

"Enter Hell along with those who enter it."

Thus, the two wives of the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) who had conspired against him disclosing his secrets and hurting the Noble Prophet (S) are warned against their evil acts so that they may not imagine that their relationship with the Noble Prophet (S) may be of any avail against their chastisement, the same manner that the relationships of the wives of Prophets Noah (as) and Lot (as) were not of any avail against Divine torments inflicted upon them owing to their betrayal and their severance of ties with the household of Prophethood and Revelation.

The blessed Verse also serves as a warning to all the believers from different walk of life against the severance of their ties with the Friends of Allah owing to committing sins and disobedience to Allah since such ties may not impede befalling of Divine torments.

It is worthy of note, however, that some Qur'an exegetes have mentioned the names of Prophet Noah's (as) wife²⁴ and that of Prophet Lot (as)²⁵ as Waliyata and Wali'ata respectively.

At any rate, the two women betrayed the two eminent Prophets (as), though their betrayal did not imply deviation from the path of chastity, since none of the wives of the Prophets (as) were ever unchaste. In the same vein, it is narrated from the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) that none of the wives of the Prophets (as) were unchaste.²⁶

The betrayal of Prophet Lot's (as) wife was that she conspired with the enemies of her husband and disclosed his domestic secrets unto them. Prophet Noah's (as) wife acted likewise. In his Mufradat, Raghīb says that betrayal (khiyana) and hypocrisy (nifaq) constitute one reality except for the fact that the former is employed against covenant and trust whereas the latter is used in religious affairs.

The conformity of the story to the disclosure of the Noble Prophet's (S) domestic secrets reflects that betrayal connotes the same sense. At any rate, the blessed Verse ruins the unfounded expectations of those who imagine that their relationship with an eminent figure like the Noble Prophet (S) may lead to their salvation, despite their impurities and vices.

Thus, no one may imagine that he is immune from Divine Retribution.

The blessed Verse closes with saying unto them:

"Enter Hell along with the people of the Hell";

namely, their relationship with the Noble Prophet (S) may not be counted as a privilege for them.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 11

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي
الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

11. And Allah has set forth an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: "My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrong doing people.

Two examples of evil women, namely the wives of Prophets Noah (as) and Lot (as), were presented in the preceding blessed Verses and two examples of good women, namely Pharaoh's wife and Mary (as), are introduced in the blessed Verses 11 and 12.

It is reported that the name of Pharaoh's wife was Àsiya and the name of her father was Muzahim. It is

said that upon witnessing Prophet Moses' (as) miracle wrought before the sorcerers, the depth of her heart was lightened by the light of faith and immediately believed in Moses (as) but she concealed her faith.

However, belief in and love for God Almighty may not be concealed forever. Upon being apprised of her belief in Allah, Pharaoh warned her against it many a time and insisted that she should desist from believing in God Almighty, but the woman persevered in her faith and did not yield to his will.

Finally, Pharaoh ordered that her limbs be tied with nails and leave her under the scorching sun and lay a huge stone on her breast.

In her last moments, she invoked to God Almighty

"My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrong doing people."

God Almighty answered the supplications of the sincerely sacrificing believing woman and made her the companion of the best women of the world like Mary (as).

It would be of interest to know that by her words, Pharaoh's wife belittled the great palace of her husband and regarded it as nothing against the home located in the proximity of Allah's Graciousness and answers to the insistent entreaties of those who provided her with admonitions saying that all those marvelous privileges were available to her as the queen of Egypt and warned her against losing them consequent to her belief in a Shepherd like Moses (as).

Thus, she utters her disgust at Pharaoh and his crimes and wrong doings.

By saying:

"My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrong doing people,"

she reveals her disgust at the impure environment and her alienation from their crimes.

The last three sentences uttered by this cognizant and sacrificing woman are so well-measured that they may serve as inspirations for all the believing men and women in the world. Such utterances impede all those who find pretexts like the pressures of the environment and spouse from turning away from obedience to God Almighty and fearing Him.

The glory and splendor of the Pharaonic court were unsurpassed at the time and the pressures and tortures inflicted upon the victims at the behest of the criminal Pharaoh were unrivaled.

Nonetheless, such glory, splendor, pressures, and tortures could not make the believing woman yield to disbelief but she persevered on treading the path leading to Divine Satisfaction and sacrificed her life in

the Cause of the true Beloved.

It is worthy of note that she invoked God Almighty to build a home for her in Paradise close to Him. Being in Paradise reflects the physical dimension and being with God Almighty is indicative of the spiritual dimension and she expressed both in one brief utterance.

Surah al-Tahrim – Verse 12

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ
بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ

12. And God Almighty has also set out the example of Mary, the daughter of ‘Imran, who guarded her chastity against sins. Then, We breathed into her through Our Spirit and Jesus was born to her and testified to the truth of the Words of her Lord and the Scriptures and she was of the obedient to Allah.

The Arabic verbal form

ahsanat ("**guarded her**"),

deriving from h-s-n, is cognate with hisn which denotes "stronghold, castle" and used concerning women connotes "chastity." The blessed Verse in question enumerates four perfect qualities for Mary (as): chastity, blowing of Divine Spirit into her, testifying to the veracity of Scriptures, and absolute obedience to God Almighty.

According to Shi'i and Sunni exegetic sources, there were four perfect women: Àsiya, Pharaoh's wife; Mary (as), the daughter of ‘Imran; Khadija, the daughter of Khwaylid; and Fatima (as), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S). The only woman whose name is attested in the Holy Qur'an is Mary (as) whose name is attested thirty four times in twelve Chapters and her name appears as the designation of a Qur'anic Chapter.

At any rate, the blessed Verse in question makes a reference to a noble woman who serves as a model for the believers, saying that God Almighty has set forth another example by making mention of Mary (as), the daughter of ‘Imran, who preserved her chastity and God Almighty breathed His Spirit into her and upon the Divine Command a son was born to her without having been married and her son was the Arch-Prophet Jesus (as).

The blessed Verse proceeds to say that she testified to the veracity of Divine Word and His Scriptures and believed in all of them and she was one of the obedient to Divine Command. She has an exalted

rank in terms of faith and she believed in all Heavenly Books. She was obedient to Divine Command at all times in terms of deeds. She was a sacrificing servant and was attentive to Divine Commands.

The difference between Words (kalimat) and Books (kutub) may lie in the point that the latter makes a reference to all Scriptures revealed unto the Prophets (as) and the former alludes to the Revelations not recorded in Divine Books. Mary (as) believed in these Words and Books such that she is referred to as

"very truthful woman" (siddiqah)

in another Qur'anic Verse²⁷:

"Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a very truthful woman [believing in the Words of Allah and His Books]. They both used to eat food. Behold how We make the Àyat ("Verses, proofs, Signs") clear to them; yet behold how they are deluded away."

At any rate, such Qur'anic expressions explicitly reflect Mary's (as) chastity against the false claims of some of the corrupt and criminal Jews concerning her who put to question her character and even her chastity and thereby inflicts and severe blow upon them.

As mentioned above, the expression

"We breathed into her through Our Spirit" (fa-nafakhna fihi min ruhina)

is indicative of the Most Majestic and the Most Sublime Spirit.

According to another interpretation, the genitive inflection of the word

"Spirit" (ruhi)

is an instance of exalting genitive (idhafa tashrifiyya) connoting glory and exaltedness, in the same manner that the word

"House"

is intertwined with

"God"

in the genitive case in the compound form

"House of God" (baytu Allahi),

though God Almighty has neither a Spirit nor a House.

Finally, it is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

*"The most exalted women in Paradise are: Khadija, the daughter of Khwaylid; Fatima (as), the daughter of Muhammad (S); Mary (as), the daughter of 'Imran; and 'Asiya, the daughter of Muzahim and the wife of Pharaoh."*²⁸

It is narrated on the authority of 'Imran ibn Hasin that the Noble Prophet (S) asked Fatima (as):

"Are you not happy to be the most exalted of the women of the world?"

She replied:

"What about the rank of Mary (as), the daughter of 'Imran?"

He answered:

*"O my beloved daughter! She was the most exalted of women in her times, but you are the most exalted of women in the world from the first to the last of them. By Allah Who appointed me as His Messenger, I gave you in marriage to one who is the lord of this world and the Hereafter. He is loved solely by the believing and he is disliked only by the hypocrites."*²⁹

Hasan ibn Ziyad, the perfume vendor, narrates from Imam Sadiq (as) that the Noble Prophet (S) was inquired whether Fatima was the most exalted of women in her times.

He said:

*"Mary (as) was the most exalted of women in her times and Fatima is the most exalted of the women of Paradise from past and present."*³⁰

1. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 311.

2. According to numerous traditions, by the righteous believer, Imam 'Ali (as) is hereby intended, see Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan and Ihqaq al-Haqq (p. 311).

3. Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 19, p. 392.

4. Sahih Bukhari, vol. 6, p. 196.

5. Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 243.

6. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 372.

7. Majmu'a Warram, vol. 1, p. 6.

8. Tafsir Maraghi.

9. 19:55

10. 14:14

11. 20:132

12. Tafsir Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 244.

13. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 142.

14. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 10, p. 6766.

15. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 318.
16. Usul Kafi, vol. 2, the Chapter on Repentance, tradition 10.
17. Mahajja al-Baydha', vol. 17, p. 24.
18. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 6, p. 265; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 19.
19. Safina al-Bihar, the Chapter on Repentance.
20. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 327.
21. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 319.
22. Next to the global disbelief, the heaviest blows were inflicted upon the Islamic Republic of Iran by the hypocrites.
23. 9:73
24. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 10, p. 668.
25. Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol 28.
26. Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 245.
27. 5:75
28. Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 246.
29. Bisharat al-Mustafa, p. 69.
30. Saduq's Amali; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, p. 21.

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