



وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا



*And put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah, as a
Disposer of affairs.*

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ahzab

الأَحْزَابُ

Introduction and Summary

The series of mystic Surahs beginning with Surah 26, having been closed with the last Surah, we now come back to the hard facts of this life. Two questions are mainly considered here, viz.,

1. the attempt by violence and brute force to crush the truth, and
2. the attempt by slander or unseemly conduct, to poison the relations of women with men.

As regards the first, the story of Al Ahzab or the Confederates, who tried to surround and annihilate the Muslim community in Madinah, is full of underhand intrigues on the part of such diverse enemies as the Pagan Quraysh, the Jews (*Banu Nadir) who had been already expelled from Madinah for their treachery, the Ghatfan tribe of Bedouin Arabs from the interior, and the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah in Madinah. This was the unholy Confederacy against Islam. But though they caused a great deal of anxiety and suffering to the beleaguered Muslims, Islam came triumphantly out of the trial and became more firmly established than ever.

The Quraysh in Makkah had tried all sorts of persecution, insult, and bodily injuries to the Muslims, leading to their partial Hijrah to Abyssinia and their Hijrah as a body to Madinah. The first armed conflict between them and the Muslims took place at Badr in Ramadan A.H. 2, when the Quraysh were signally defeated. (See n. 352 to 3:13). Next year (Shawwal A.H. 3) they came to take revenge on Madinah. The battle was fought at Uhud, and though the Muslims suffered severely, Madinah was saved and the Makkans had to return to Makkah with their object frustrated. Then they began to make a network of intrigues and alliances, and besieged Madinah with a force of 10,000 men in Shawwal and Dhu al Qadah A.H. 5. This is the siege of Confederates referred to in 33:9-27, which lasted over two weeks: some accounts give 27 days. It caused much suffering, from hunger, cold, an unceasing shower of arrows, and constant general or concentrated assaults. But it ended in the discomfiture of the Confederates, and established Islam firmer than ever. It was a well-organized and formidable attack, but the Muslims had made the Trench (Khandaq) dug round Madinah by the Prophets' order and under the supervision of Salman the Persian. The siege and battle are therefore known as the Battle of Trench or the Battle of Confederates.

As regards the position and dignity of the ladies of the Prophet's Household and the Muslim women generally, salutary principles are laid down to safeguard their homes and protect them from slander and insult. The ladies of the Household interested themselves in social work and work of instruction for the Muslim women, and Muslim women were being trained more and more in community service. Two of them (the two Zaynab) devoted

themselves to the poor. The nursing of the wounded on or by the battlefield was specially necessary in those days of warfare. The Prophet's daughter Fatima, then aged about q19 t0 20, lovingly nursed her father's wounds at Uhud (A.H. 3): Rufaydah nursed Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh wounds at the Siege of Madinah by the Confederates (A.H. 5): and in the Khaybar expedition (A.H. 7) Muslim women went out from Madinah for nursing service.

A portion of this Surah sums up the lessons of Battle of the Trench and must have been revealed some time after that Battle (Shawwal A.H. 5). The marriage with Zaynab referred to in verse 37 also took place in the same year. Some portions (e.g., verse 27, see n. 3705) were probably revealed in A.H. 7 after the Khaybar settlement.

Summary- The pagan customs in human relationships should be abandoned, and men and women should be held in honour according to natural relationships and spiritual positions (33:1-8, and C. 186).

The Battle of the Trench and its lessons; hypocrites and their fears; Truth and examples to be followed (33:9-27, and C. 187).

High position and seemly conduct for the Prophet's wives unhappy marriage (like Zaynab's) not to be perpetuated on false scruples; Prophet's wives to be treated kindly and gently (33:28-52, and C. 188).

Respect due to Prophet and his family; slander to be avoided and punished; guard your words and your responsibilities (33:53-73, and C. 189).

C.186 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:1-8)

The issue of all things depends

On Allah alone: we must put our trust

On Him as the Guardian of all things, both great

*And small; call things by their right names.
If false relationships by custom or superstition
Do harm to men or women, shun them.
The spiritual Guide is more than Father;
The ladies of his household are Mothers
To the Believers-in rank, dignity, and duty.
The Guide will have to give an account
In the Hereafter, and how the Truth was received
Which he was charged to proclaim to men.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ...

1. O Prophet! Fear Allah, and hearken not to the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites:

C3666. The fifth year A.H. was a critical year in the external history of early Islam, and this Surah must be read in the light of the events that then took place.

As explained in the Introduction, the Grand Confederacy against Islam came and invested Madinah and failed utterly. It consisted of the Makkan Unbelievers, the desert Arabs of Central Arabia, the Jews previously expelled for treachery from Madinah, the Jews remaining in Madinah and the Hypocrites led by Abdullah ibn Ubi, who have already been described in 9:43-110.

Their bond of union was the common hatred of Islam, and it snapped under the reverses they met with. It is important to note three points.

1. The Jews as a body now lost their last chance of bearing the standard of Islam: the best of them had already accepted the renewal of Allah's Message.
2. A definite status was given to Prophet's household, after the slanders on Hadhrat Aisha had been stilled

(24:11-26), and the true position of the Mothers of the Believers had been cleared.

3. A further exposition of the purity of sex relation was given, based on the story of Hadhrat Zaynab, the "Mother of the Poor". These points will be referred to in later notes.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١)

verily Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

2. But follow that which comes to thee by inspiration from thy Lord:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (٢)

for Allah is well acquainted with (all) that ye do.

C3667. In the most adverse circumstances, in the midst of the assaults of Evil, the plots of treason and hypocrisy, the darts of slanders and false charges, and stupid superstitions and taboos, the Prophet of Allah should steer his course steadily according to Allah's Law and not fear human evil, in whatever form it appears.

Men may misjudge, but Allah knows all. Men may try to overthrow Good, but Wisdom is with Allah. (R).

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (٣)

3. And put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah, as a Disposer of affairs.

C3668. We must wholly trust Allah; He is the true and efficient Guardian of all interests.

Cf. 4:81, and n. 600.

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ...

4. Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body:

C3669. "Two hearts in his (one) breast": two inconsistent attitudes:

- such as serving Allah and Mammon; or

- subscribing to both Truth and Superstition; or
- hypocritically pretending one thing and intending another.

Such a thing is against Allah's Law and Will.

Apart from the condemnation of general hypocrisy, two pagan customs of the Times of Ignorance are mentioned, and their iniquity pointed out.

See the notes 3670 and 3671.

Nor can a man love two women with equal love; hence the injustice of marrying more than one wife; see the second clause in 4:3. (R).

...وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ اللَّائِي تُظَاهَرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ...

nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by **Zihar** your mothers:

C3670. This was an evil Arab custom, by which the husband selfishly deprived his wife of her conjugal rights and yet kept her to himself like a slave without her being free to remarry. He pronounced words importing that she was like his mother. After that she could not demand conjugal rights but was not free from his control and could not contract another marriage.

See also 58:1-5. where this is condemned in the strongest terms and punishment is provided for it.

A man sometimes said such words in a fit of anger; they did not affect him, but they degraded her position.

...وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ...

nor has He made your adopted sons your sons.

C3671. If a man called another's son "his son", it might create complications with natural and normal relationships if taken too literally.

It is pointed out that it is only a *façon de parler* in men's mouths, and should not be taken literally. The truth is the truth and cannot be altered by men's adopting "sons".

"Adoption" in the technical sense is not allowed in Muslim Law.

Those who have been "wives of your sons proceeding from your loins" are within the Prohibited Degrees of marriage; 4:23: but this does not apply to "adopted" sons.

ذَلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ...

Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths.

وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ (٤)

But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way.

ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ...

5. Call them by (the names) of their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah,

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ...

but if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your Brothers in faith, or your Maulas.

C3672. Freedmen were often called after their master's name as the "son of so and so". When they were slaves, perhaps their father's names were lost altogether. It is more correct to speak of them as the **Maula** of so and so. But **Maula** in Arabic might also imply a close relationship of friendship: in that case, too, it is better to use the right term instead of the term "son".

"Brother" is not objectionable because "Brotherhood" is used in a wider sense than "fatherhood" and is not likely to be misunderstood.

...وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ...

But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts:

C3673. What is aimed at is to destroy the superstition of erecting false relationships to the detriment or loss of true blood relations. It is not intended to penalize an unintentional slip in the matter, and indeed, even if a man deliberately calls another his son or father, who is

not his son or father, out of politeness or affection, "Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful". It is the action of mischievous parties which is chiefly reprehended, if they intend false insinuations. A mere mistake on their part does not matter. (R).

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٥)

and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

6. The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves,

C3674. In spiritual relationship the Prophet is entitled to more respect and consideration than blood-relations, where there is conflict of duties. He is ever nearer – closer to our real interests – than our own selves.

In some Qira'ahs, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, occur also the words "and he is a father of them", which imply his spiritual relationship and connect on with the words "and his wives are their mothers".

Thus his spiritual fatherhood would be contrasted pointedly with the repudiation of the vulgar superstition of calling any one like Zayd ibn Harithah by the appellation Zayd ibn Muhammad (33:40): such an application is really disrespectful of the Prophet.

... وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ ...

and his wives are their mothers.

C3675. See last note. This Surah establishes the dignity and position of the Holy Prophet's wives, who had a special mission and responsibility as Mothers of the Believers.

They were not to be like ordinary women: they had to instruct women in religious matters visit and minister to those who were ill or in distress, and do other kindly offices in aid of the Prophet's mission.

...وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ...

Blood-relations among each other have closer personal ties, in the Decree of Allah, than (the Brotherhood of) Believers and Muhajirs:

C3676. No man should deprive his blood-relations of such rights of maintenance and property as they might have. The community of Believers, inhabitants of Madinah and those who had migrated to Madinah from Makkah, also had their mutual rights, but they were not to be put forward as an excuse to defeat the prior rights of natural relationships.

In the early Madinah days, Ansar were allowed to inherit from Muhajirs whose natural relations had not emigrated, but this practice was discontinued when normal relations were reestablished between Makkah and Madinah.

...إِنَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا...

nevertheless do ye what is just to your closest friends:

...كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا (٦)

such is the writing in the Decree (of Allah).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ...

7. And remember We took from the Prophets their Covenant as (We did) from thee: from Noah,

C3677. Cf. 3:81.

There is an implied covenant on all created things to follow Allah's Law, which is the law of their being; see 5:1.

But there is a special implied covenant with all Prophets, strict and solemn, that they shall carry out their mission, proclaim Allah's Truth without fear or favour, and be ever ready in His service in all circumstances. That gives them their position and dignity as explained in the last

verse, and their tremendous responsibility in respect of the people whom they come to instruct and lead to the right Path.

...وَأَبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ...

Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary:

...وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (٧)

We took from them a solemn Covenant:

لِيَسْأَلَ الصَّادِقِينَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ...

8. That (Allah) may question the (Custodians) of Truth concerning the Truth they (were charged with):

C3678. The men to whom Allah's Truth has been committed for promulgation will be asked in the Hereafter as to how the Truth fared in the world-how it was received, who opposed it, and who assisted it.

Like all trustees, they will have to give a full account of their trust. Allah knows all, and it will not add to His information. But it will be evidence for and against those to whom it was preached, so that the responsibility of those who dishonoured it may be duly enforced.

The primary custodians of spiritual Truth are the Prophets, but in descending degrees all men to whom Allah's Message comes are included.

...وَأَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٨)

and He has prepared for the Unbelievers a grievous Penalty.

C.187 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:9-27)

*When the formidable forces of a whole Confederacy
Bent on destroying Islam burst
Upon Madinah, it was Allah's grace that saved
The Muslims. The enemies and the Hypocrites*

*Did their best to defeat the purpose of Allah,
But they were foiled. In the Prophet was found
The ideal Leader for the men of God,
Who became heirs to the heritage; misused
By enemies to Faith and the Laws of Allah.*

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ...

9. O ye who believe!

Remember the Grace of Allah, (bestowed) on you,

...إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ ...

when there came down on you hosts (to overwhelm you):

C3679. In this verse is summed up the beginning and the end of the fateful struggle of the Siege of Madinah in A.H. 5.

The composition of the unhallowed Confederacy that came to destroy Islam is referred to in the Introduction. They came with a force of ten to twelve thousand fighting men, an unprecedented army for that time and country. The battle is known as the Battle of the Trench.

... فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا...

but We sent against them a hurricane and force that ye saw not.

C3680. After a close investment of two to four weeks, during which the enemy were disheartened by their ill success, there was a piercing blast of the cold east wind. It was a severe winter, and February can be a very cold month in Madinah, which is about 3,000 ft. above the sea-level.

The enemy's tents were torn up, their fires were extinguished, the sand and rain beat in their faces, and they were terrified by the portents against them. They had already well nigh fallen out amongst themselves, and beating a hasty retreat, they melted away.

The Madinah fighting strength was no more than 3,000, and the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah who were in their midst was a source of weakness as they were treacherously intriguing with the enemy. And further there were the Hypocrites: see [n. 3666 above](#). But there were hidden forces that helped the Muslims.

Besides the forces of nature there were moral forces - mutual distrust and bickering in the enemy camp, and on the other side, perfect discipline among the real Muslims, and the superb leadership of the Holy Prophet.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (٩)

But Allah sees (clearly) all that ye do.

C3681. Allah sees everything. Therefore we may conclude that the discipline and moral fervour of the Muslims, as well as the enemy's insincerities, intrigues, and reliance on brute force, were all contributory causes to his repulse, under Allah's dispensation.

There were many hidden causes which neither party saw clearly.

إِذْ جَاؤُكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ...

10. Behold! they came on you from above you and from below you,

وَأِذْ زَاغَتْ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ...

and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats,

C3682. The psychology of the combatants is described with matchless vigour in the holy Text. The onrush of the enemy was really tremendous. The Trench round Madinah was between the defenders and the huge attacking force, which had some high ground behind them "**above you**": when any of them came through the valley or over the Trench, they seemed to come **from below**. The showers of arrows and stones on both sides must also have seemed to come from the air.

وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا (١٠)

and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah!

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زَلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا (١١)

11. In that situation were the Believers tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking.

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ...

12. And behold! the Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease (even) say:

...مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا (١٢)

"Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion!"

C3683. Before this year's mass attack on Madinah the Muslims had successfully reached the Syrian border on the north, and there were hopes of reaching Yemen in the south. The holy Prophet had seen signs of expansion and victory for the Muslims. Now that they were shut in within the Trench on the defensive, the Hypocrites taunted them with having indulged in delusive hopes. But the event showed that the hopes were not delusive. They were realized beyond expectations in a few years.

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا...

13. Behold! a party among them said: "Ye men of Yathrib! Ye cannot stand (the attack)! Therefore go back!"

...وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ...

and a band of them ask for leave of the Prophet, saying, "Truly our houses are bare and exposed,"

C3684. All the fighting men of Madinah had come out of the city and camped in the open space between the City and the Trench that had been dug all round.

The disaffected Hypocrites sowed defeatist rumours and pretended to withdraw for the defence of their homes, though their homes were not exposed, and were fully covered by the vigilant defensive force inside the Trench.

...وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ...

though they were not exposed:

...إِن يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا (١٣)

they intended nothing but to run away.

وَلَوْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سَأَلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَأْتَوْهَا...

14. And if an entry had been effected to **them** from the sides of the (City), and they had been incited to sedition they would certainly have brought it to pass,

C3685. The brunt of the fighting was on the north side, but the whole Trench was guarded. At one or two points enemy warriors did break in within the circuit of the Trench, but they were soon disposed off.

Hadhrat Ali particularly distinguished himself in many fights, wearing the Prophet's own sword and armour.

If any of the enemy had been able to penetrate into the City, the disaffected element, which was only sitting on the fence, would have risen against the Muslims at once-with no delay except what might have been necessary to put on their armour and arms.

...وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوا بِهَا إِلَّا يَسِيرًا (١٤)

with none but a brief delay!

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُولُونَ الْأُدْبَارَ...

15. And yet they had already covenanted with Allah not to turn their backs,

...وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ مَسْئُورًا (١٥)

and a covenant with Allah must (surely) be answered for.

C3686. Apparently, after the battle of Uhud, certain men who had then shown cowardice were forgiven on undertaking that they would behave better next time.

A solemn promise made to the Messenger of Allah is a promise to Allah, and it cannot be broken with impunity.

قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ...

16. Say: "Running away will not profit you

...إِنَّ قَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ ...

if ye are running away from death or slaughter;

C3687. The coward in a fight does not usually save himself from death. He is subject, after desertion, to the fury both of the enemy and of his own side for cowardice and desertion.

Assuming that he did escape with his life, where could he go to?

The brand of cowardice will be on him, and he will be Subject to the vengeance of his own people. In any case, his life would be in ignominy and would be brief, and he would have lost irretrievably the meed of valour.

... وَإِذَا نَا تَمَتُّونَ إِنَّا قَلِيلًا (١٦)

and even if (ye do escape), no more than a brief (respite) will ye be allowed to enjoy!"

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ...

17. Say:

"Who is it that can screen you from Allah if it be His wish to give you Punishment or to give you Mercy?"

C3688. It is still worse if the cowardice or desertion is shown in a Cause, which, because of the high issues of truth and justice, may be called the Cause of Allah.

How can any one escape Allah's Punishment?

And in the same way, how can any one prevent another from obtaining Allah's Mercy by repentance and amendment?

The better path, therefore, is to stand firm in Allah's Way, and if you fail through human weakness, to repent and seek Allah's Mercy.

Cf. [33:24](#), and [n. 3698](#) below.

...وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (١٧)

Nor will they find for themselves, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُعَوِّقِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا...

18. Verily Allah knows those among you who keep back (men) and those who say to their brethren, "Come along to us,"

...وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٨)

but come not to the fight except for just a little while.

أَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ...

19. Covetous over you.

C3689. Ashihhatan: covetous, grasping, niggardly.

Here the meaning is twofold:

1. they spare themselves in the fight as compared with you;
they are niggardly with themselves as against you:
they contribute little either in personal effort or with their money and resources; and
2. they covet any gains made or booty won, on the part of the real fighters.

...فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ...

Then when fear comes, thou wilt see them looking to thee,

...تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي يُغْتَنَى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ...

their eyes revolving, like (those of) one over whom hovers death:

...فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَفُوكُمْ بِأَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ أَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ....

but when the fear is past, they will smite you with sharp tongues, covetous of goods.

C3690. In times of danger, they would look to the holy Prophet for protection, and keep themselves snugly from the fight.

When the danger is past, they will come and brag and wrangle and show their covetousness or greed for gain though they gave of themselves but sparingly.

...أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

Such men have no faith, and so Allah has made their deeds of none effect:

C3691. Even any good they may have done becomes vain because of their motives of envy, greed, and covetousness, and their cowardice.

...وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (١٩)

and that is easy for Allah.

C3692. It is not surprising that men's deeds fall as it were dead because there is no pure motive behind them. For men it may be difficult to probe motives, but it is easy for Allah, Whom hypocrisy or false show can never deceive.

يَحْسَبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا...

20. They think that the Confederates have not withdrawn;

...وَإِنْ يَأْتِ الْأَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوا لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ بَادُونَ فِي الْأَعْرَابِ...

and if the Confederates should come (again), they would wish they were in the deserts (wandering) among the Bedouins,

...يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ أَنْبَائِكُمْ... ..

and seeking news about you (from a safe distance);

C3693. This completes the picture of the psychology of the Hypocrites, begun at [verse 12](#). Let us analyze it.

1. When they first saw the enemy they were already in a defeatist mood, and thought all was over ([verse 12](#)).
2. Not content with disloyalty themselves, they tried to infect others, who made paltry excuses to withdraw from the fight ([verse 13](#)).
3. They were ready to betray the City to the enemy if once the enemy had gained entrance ([verse 14](#)).

4. They forgot all the promises of fidelity which they had previously sworn (verse 15).
5. In their paltry calculations they forgot that cowardice in war does not pay (verses 16-17).
6. Without taking much part in the actual defence, they were ready to talk glibly and claim a lion's share in the fruits of the victory (verses 18-19).
7. Even when the enemy had withdrawn, their cowardly minds were still afraid that the enemy would return, and were already meditating what they would do in that case:

perhaps they would dwell in the deserts and spy on Madinah from a safe distance; and if caught in Madinah they would fight little and intrigue much.

It was a miracle that with such men in their midst, the holy Prophet and his band won through.

...وَلَوْ كَانُوا فِيكُمْ مَا قَاتَلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٢٠)

and if they were in your midst, they would fight but little.

Section 3

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ...

21. Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct)

...لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ ...

for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day,

C3694. We now have the psychology of the Believers,- God-fearing men, led by that pattern of men and of leaders, Muhammad Al-Mustafa.

... وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا (٢١)

and who engages much in the praise of Allah.

C3695. Cf. 26:227: see especially the last clause of that verse in a Makkan Surah, which was amply fulfilled in Madinah.

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا...

22. When the Believers saw the Confederate forces, they said:

...هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ...

"This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and his Messenger told us what was true."

C3696. This is in contrast to what the Hypocrites said in [verse 12 above](#).

The divine promise of help and success is contingent upon our striving and faith. Nothing comes to the poltroon and the skeptical idler. Dangers and difficulties, and conflict with Evil, are foretold us, and we must meet them with fortitude and courage.

...وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا (٢٢)

And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ...

23. Among the Believers are men who have been true to their Covenant with Allah:

...فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ...

of them some have completed their vow to (the extreme), and some (still) wait:

C3697. In the fight for truth were (and are) many who sacrificed their all-resources, knowledge, influence, life itself-in the Cause, and never wavered.

If they won the crown of martyrdom, they were blessed. Such a one was Sa'd ibn Muaz, the chief of the Aus tribe, the intrepid standard-bearer of Islam, who died of a wound he had received in the Battle of the Trench. Other heroes fought valiantly and lived, always ready to lay down their lives.

Both classes were staunch: they never changed or wavered.

...وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣)

but they have never changed (their determination) in the least:

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ...

24. That Allah may reward the men of Truth for their Truth

...وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ...

and punish the Hypocrites if that be His Will, or turn to them in Mercy:

C3698. Before Allah's Mercy there is always room for repentance and forgiveness, even after treason and crime; but the forgiveness will be according to Allah's Will and Plan, which will judge the penitent's sincerity and capacity for good to the nicest degree in his favour.

Cf. also 33:17 above.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٢٤)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا...

25. And Allah turned back the Unbelievers for (all) their fury: no advantage did they gain,

C3699. In spite of the mighty preparations and the great forces which the Makkans in concert with the Central Arabian Bedouins, the discontented Jews, and the treacherous Hypocrites, brought to the siege of Madinah, all their plans were frustrated.

Their fury availed them nothing. They departed in hot haste. This was their last and dying effort.

The initiative thereafter lay with the forces of Islam.

...وَكَفَى اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ...

and enough is Allah for the Believers in their fight.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيمًا (٢٥)

And Allah is full of Strength, Able to enforce His Will.

C3700. For the meaning of **Aziz**, see n. 2818 to 22:40.

وَأَنْزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ...

26. And those of the People of the Book who aided them -- Allah did take them down...

C3701. The reference is to the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah.

They counted among the citizens of Madinah and were bound by solemn engagements to help in the defence of the City. But on the occasion of the Confederate siege by the Quraish and their allies they intrigued with the enemies and treacherously aided them. Immediately after the siege was raised and the Confederates had fled in hot haste, the Prophet turned his attention to these treacherous "friends" who had betrayed his City in the hour of danger.

... مِنْ صَيَاصِيهِمْ...

... from their strongholds

C3702. The Banu Qurayzah (see last note) were filled with terror and dismay when Madinah was free from the Quraish danger.

They shut themselves up in their castles about three or four miles to the east (or north east) of Madinah, and sustained a siege of 25 days, after which they surrendered, stipulating that they would abide by the decision of their fate at the hands of Sa'd ibn Muaz, chief of the Aus tribe, with which they had been in alliance.

... وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ قَرِيبًا تَفْتُلُونَ ...

and cast terror into their hearts, (so that) some ye slew,

C3703. Sa'd applied to them the Jewish Law of the Old Testament, not as strictly as the case warranted.

In Deut. 20:10-18, the treatment of a city "which is very far off from thee" is prescribed to be comparatively more lenient than the treatment of a city "of those people, which the Lord thy God does give thee for an inheritance," i.e., which is near enough to corrupt the religion of the Jewish people. The punishment for these

is total annihilation: "thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20:16).

The more lenient treatment for far-off cities is described in the next note, According to the Jewish standard, then, the Banu Quraiza deserved total extermination-of men, women, and children. They were in the territory of Madinah itself, and further they had broken their engagements and helped the enemy.

... وَتَأْسِرُونَ قَرِيبًا (٢٦)

and some ye made prisoners.

C3704. Sa'd adjudged them the milder treatment of the "far-off" cities which is thus described in the Jewish Law: "Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee" (Deut. 20:13-14).

The men of the Qurayzah were slain: the women were sold as captives of war; and their lands and properties were divided among the Muhajirs.

وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَمْ تَطُورُوهَا...

27. And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which ye had not frequented (before).

C3705. If this part of the Surah was revealed after the autumn of the Hijrah year 7, it refers to the result of the Khaybar expedition of the autumn.

Khaybar is a Harrah or volcanic tract, well-watered with many springs issuing from its basaltic rocks. It has a good irrigation system and produces good harvests of grain and dates in its wet valleys, while the outcrop of rocks in the high ground affords sites for numerous fortresses.

At present it is inhabited chiefly by men of the race of Bilal (the Abyssinian) who played a prominent part in the

expedition. It is a sort of island in the deserts on the outskirts of Najd.

In the holy Prophet's time there were Jewish colonies settled here, but they were a source of constant trouble especially after Siege of Madinah. It became a nest of all the hostile Jewish elements expelled for their treachery from elsewhere.

Its capital, Khaybar, is about 90 miles due north of Madinah. Its inhabitants offered some resistance, and Hadhrat Ali, though he had just risen from a bed of illness, performed prodigies of valour. After its surrender, a land settlement was made, which retained the cultivators of the soil on the land, but brought them under control, so that no further focus of active hostility should remain near Madinah.

The terms of the settlement will be found in Waqidi.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا (٢٧)

And Allah has power over all things.

C.188 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:28-52)

*The Prophet's household is not for worldly
Ends; his consorts have a place
And dignity beyond ordinary women
They must recite and proclaim the Signs
Of Allah. For women have spiritual virtues
And duties like unto men. Allah decrees,
No unhappy wedlock; fear not
To dissolve such and provide what is right
And fitting for the service of Allah. High
Is the Prophet's positions, and he must order
His household as best befits his work
And duties. Allah doth watch all things.*

Section 4

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأزْوَاجِكَ...

28. O Prophet! say to thy Consorts:

...إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا...

"If it be that ye desire the life of this world, and its glitter, --

...فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمْتَعْنَنَّ وَأَسْرَحْنَنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا (٢٨)

then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner."

C3706. We now come to the subject of the position of the Consorts of Purity (*azwaj mutahharat*), the wives of the holy Prophet.

Their position was not like that of ordinary women or ordinary wives. They had special duties and responsibilities.

The only youthful marriage of the holy Prophet was his first marriage—that with Hadhrat Khadija, the best of women and the best of wives. He married her fifteen years before he received his call to Prophethood; their married life lasted for twenty-five years, and their mutual devotion was of the noblest, judged by spiritual as well as social standards. During her life he had no other wife, which was unusual for a man of his standing among his people. When she died, his age was 50, and but for two considerations, he would probably never have married again, as he was most abstemious in his physical life.

The two considerations which governed his later marriages were:

1. compassion and clemency, as when he wanted to provide for suffering widows, who could not be provided for in any other way in that stage of society; some of them, like Sauda, had issue by their former marriage, requiring protection;

2. help in his duties of leadership, with women, who had to be instructed and kept together in the large Muslim family, where women and men had similar social rights.
 - Hadhrat Aisha, daughter of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, was clever and learned, and in Hadith she is an important authority on the life of the Prophet.
 - Hadhrat Zaynab, daughter of Khuzaima, was specially devoted to the poor; she was called the "Mother of the Poor".
 - The other Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh, also worked for the poor, for whom she provided from the proceeds of her manual work, as she was skillful in leather work.

But all the Consorts in their high position had to work and assist as Mothers of the Ummah. Theirs were not idle lives, like those of Odaliques, either for their own pleasure or the pleasure of their husband.

They are told here that they had no place in the sacred Household if they merely wished for ease or worldly glitter. If such were the case, they could be divorced and amply provided for.

وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالذَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ...

29. But if ye seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter,

...فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٢٩)

verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward.

C3707. They were all well-doers. But being in their exalted position, they had extra responsibility, and they had to be specially careful to discharge it. In the same way their reward would be "great", for higher services bring higher spiritual satisfaction, though they were asked to deny themselves some of the ordinary indulgences of this life.

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ...

30. O Consorts of the Prophet!

...مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُمْ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيَّنَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ...

if any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the Punishment would be doubled to her,

C3708. "Evident unseemly conduct" i.e., proved misconduct, as opposed to false slanders from enemies.

Such slanders were of no account, but if any of them had behaved in an unseemly manner, it would have been a worse offence than in the case of ordinary women, on account of their special position. Of course none of them were in the least guilty.

...وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (٣٠)

and that is easy for Allah.

C3709. Cf. [33:19](#) and [n. 3692](#).

The punishment in this life for a married woman's unchastity is very severe:

- for fornication, public flogging with a hundred stripes, under 24:2;
- or for lewdness (see 4:15) imprisonment;
- or stoning to death for adultery, according to certain precedents established in Canon Law.

But here the question is not about this kind of punishment or this kind of offence. Even minor indiscretions, in the case of women who were patterns of decorum, would have been reprehensible; and the punishment in the Hereafter is on a higher plane, which we can scarcely understand.

But Allah can appreciate every shade of motive in us. More or less is possible there, which might not be possible in the rough and ready law which we administer here.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ مِنْكُمْ لِحْوَ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِيهَا أَجْرَهَا
مَرَّتَيْنِ...

31. But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Messenger, and works righteousness -- to her shall We grant her reward twice:

C3710. Twice, i.e., once as a righteous woman, and again as a Mother of the Believers, serving the believing women and thus showing her devotion to Allah and His Prophet.

...وَأَعَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا (٣١)

and We have prepared for her a generous Sustenance.

C3711. Sustenance: all that is necessary to sustain her in happiness in her future life.

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ...

32. O Consorts of the Prophet!

ye are not like any of the (other) women:

C3712. This is the core of the whole passage.

The Prophet's Consorts were not like ordinary women, nor was their marriage an ordinary marriage, in which only personal or social considerations enter.

They had a special position and special responsibilities, in the matter of guiding and instructing women who came into the fold of Islam. Islam is a Way of Life, and the Muslims are a family: women have as much place in Islam as men, and their intimate instruction must obviously be through women.

...إِن اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ...

if ye do fear (Allah), be not too complaisant of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire:

...وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا (٣٢)

but speak ye a speech (that is) just.

C3713. While they were to be kind and gentle to all, they were to be guarded on account of their special position lest people might misunderstand or take advantage of their kindness.

They were to make no vulgar worldly displays as in the times of Paganism.

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى...

33. - And stay quietly in your houses,
- and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance;

...وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

- and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity;
and obey Allah and His Messenger.

C3714. Obedience to Allah's Law sums up all duties. Regular Prayer (seeking nearness to Allah) and Regular Charity (doing good to fellow-creatures) are mentioned as special features of our Religion.

...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ...

And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family,

C3715. Notice the transition in the clause to the masculine gender, while before this the verbs and pronouns were in the feminine gender as referring to the Consorts. The statement in the clause is now more general including (besides the consort) the whole family, namely Fatimah the daughter, Ali the on-in-law, and their sons Hasan and Husayn, the beloved grandsons of the Prophet. The masculine gender is used generally, in speaking of a mixed assembly of men and women.

...وَيُطَهِّرْكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (٣٣)

and to make you pure and spotless.

وَأَذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ...

34. And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His wisdom:

C3716. The verb is **uzkurna**, feminine gender, as referring to the **Azwaj** again.

It means not only "remember", but "recite", "teach", "make known", "publish", the Message which ye learn at home from the holy Prophet, the fountain of spiritual knowledge.

The "**Signs of Allah**" refer specially to the verses of the Quran, and Wisdom to the resulting Instruction derived therefrom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا (٣٤)

for Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with them).

C3717. Cf. [22:63](#) and [n. 2844](#).

Allah's understanding is perfect in every detail, however minute. Therefore use His Revelation for every phase of life.

Section 5

...إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

35. - For Muslim men and women --
- for believing men and women,

C3718. Islam, or submitting our will to Allah's Will, includes all the virtues, as particularly specified in this verse.

See [n. 3720](#).

...وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ...

- for devout men and women,
- for true men and women,

...وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ...

- for men and women who are patient and constant,
- for men and women who humble themselves,

وَالْمُتَّصِدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَّصِدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ...

- for men and women who give in charity
- for men and women who fast (and deny themselves),

C3719. A number of Muslim virtues are specified here, but the chief stress is laid on the fact that these virtues are as necessary to women as to men.

Both sexes have spiritual as well as human rights and duties in an equal degree, and the future "reward" of the Hereafter, viz., Spiritual Bliss, is provided for the one as for the other.

وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ...

- for men and women who guard their chastity,

وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ ...

- and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise --

C3720. The virtues referred to are:

1. Faith, hope, and trust in Allah, and in His benevolent government of the world;
2. devotion and service in practical life;
3. love and practice of truth, in thought and intention, word and deed;
4. patience and constancy, in suffering and in right endeavour;
5. humility, the avoidance of an attitude of arrogance and superiority;
6. charity, i.e., help to the poor and unfortunate ones in life, a special virtue arising out of the general duty of service (No. 2);
7. self-control, typically in food, but generally in all appetites;
8. chastity, purity in sex life, purity in motive, thought, word, and deed;
9. and constant attention to Allah's Message, and cultivation of the desire to get nearer to Allah.

...أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٣٥)

for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ ...

36. It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman,

... إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ...

when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision:

C3721. We must not put our own wisdom in competition with Allah's wisdom. Allah's decree is often known to us by the logic of facts. We must accept it loyally, and do the best we can to help in our own way to carry it out. We must make our will consonant to the Allah's Will. (R).

...وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا (٣٦)

if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ...

37. Behold! thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favor:

C3722. This was Zayd son of Harithah, one of the first to accept the faith of Islam. He was a freedman of the holy Prophet, who loved him as a son and gave him in marriage his own cousin Zaynab.

The marriage however turned out to be unhappy.

See next note.

...أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ ...

"Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah."

...وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ...

But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest:

C3723. Zayd's marriage with the Prophet's cousin Zaynab daughter of Jahsh did not turn out happy.

Zaynab the high-born looked down upon Zayd the freedman who had been a slave. And he was not comely to look at. Both were good people in their own way, and both loved the Prophet, but there was mutual incompatibility and this is fatal to married life.

Zayd wished to divorce her, but the Prophet asked him to hold his hand, and he obeyed. She was closely related to the Prophet; he had given a handsome marriage gift on her marriage to Zayd; and people would certainly talk if such a marriage was broken off.

But marriages are made on earth, not in heaven, and it is no part of Allah's Plan to torture people in a bond which should be a source of happiness but actually is a source of misery.

Zayd's wish-indeed the mutual wish of the couple-was for the time being put away, but it became eventually an established fact, and everybody came to know of it. (R).

...وَتَخَشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ...

thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah.

C3724. All actual facts are referred to Allah.

When the marriage is unhappy, Islam permits the bond to be dissolved, provided that all interests concerned are safeguarded. Apparently there was no issue here to be considered.

Zaynab had to be considered, and she obtained the dearest wish of her heart in being raised to be a Mother of the Believers, with all the dignity and responsibility of that position. See [n. 3706 to 33:28](#) above.

...فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا...

Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We joined her in marriage to thee:

C3725. The *Iddah* or period of waiting after divorce (2:228, and n. 254) was duly completed.

...لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ ...

in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons,

C3726. The Pagan superstition and taboo about adopted sons had to be destroyed.

See [33:4-5](#) and notes [3671-3672](#) above.

...إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطْرًا ...

when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them:

...وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (٣٧)

and Allah's command must be fulfilled.

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ...

38. There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty.

C3727. See [n. 3724](#) above.

...سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away,

C3728. The next clause is parenthetical. These words then connect on with [verse 39](#).

Among the people of the Book there was no taboo about adopted sons, as there was in Pagan Arabia.

...وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدْرًا مَقْدُورًا (٣٨)

and the command of Allah is a decree determined.

C3729. Allah's ordering of the world is always full of wisdom. Even our unhappiness and misery may actually have a great meaning for ourselves or others or both. If our first Plan seems to fail, we must not murmur and repine, but retrieve the position by adopting a course

which appears to be the best possible in the light of our duties as indicated by Allah. For Allah's Plan is framed on universal principles that cannot be altered by human action.

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

39. (It is the practice of those) who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him,

and fear none but Allah:

...وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا (٣٩)

and enough is Allah to call (men) to account.

C3730. Our responsibility is to Allah, not to men. Men's opinions may have a bearing on our own interpretation of duty, but when that duty is clear, our only course is to obey Allah rather than men.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ...

40. Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,

but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets:

C3731. When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition.

The holy Prophet Muhammad closed the long line of Messengers. Allah's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muhammad. The later ages will want thinkers and reformers, not Prophets.

This is not an arbitrary matter. It is a decree full of knowledge and wisdom: "for Allah has full knowledge of all things."

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٤٠)

and Allah has full knowledge of all things.

Section 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا (٤١)

41. O ye who believe!

celebrate the praises of Allah and do this often;

وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٤٢)

42. And glorify Him morning and evening.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ...

43. He it is Who sends blessings on you, as do His angels,

C3732. Blessings: good wishes and mercies.

Allah wishes well to all His creatures, and His angels carry out His work, for their will is in all things His Will.

His chief and everlasting blessing is that He gives us a knowledge of the spiritual world, and helps us towards its attainment.

For the symbolic meaning of Light and Darkness, see 24:35-40, and notes.

...لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

that He may bring you out from the depths of Darkness into Light:

...وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا (٤٣)

and He is Full of Mercy to the Believers.

C3733. His Mercies are for all His creatures, but for those who believe and trust in Him, there are special mercies, "a generous Reward" as in the next verse.

تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهُ سَلَامٌ...

44. Their salutation on the Day they meet Him will be "peace!":

...وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَرِيمًا (٤٤)

and He has prepared for them a generous Reward.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٤٥)

45. O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and a Warner --

C3734. The Prophet was sent by Allah in five capacities. Three are mentioned in this verse, and the other two in the verse following.

1. He comes as a Witness to all men about the spiritual truths which had been obscured by ignorance or superstition, or by the dust of sectarian controversy.

He did not come to establish a new religion or sect. He came to teach Religion.

He is also a witness to Allah about men's doings and how they receive Allah's Message: see 4:41 and n. 560.

2. He comes as a bearer of the Glad Tidings of the Mercy of Allah. No matter how far men may have transgressed, they have hope if they believe, repent, and live a good life.
3. He also comes as a Warner to those who are heedless. This life will not last. There is a Future Life, and that is all- important. See next note.

وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا (٤٦)

46. And as one who invites to Allah's (Grace) by His leave, and as a Lamp spreading Light.

C3735. See last note. The two other capacities in which the Prophet was sent are here specified.

4. He comes as one who has a right to invite all men to repentance and the forgiveness of sins: but he does this, not of his own authority, but by the permission and authority given to him by Allah.

This is said lest people may deify the Prophet as they did with other Prophets before him. The personal responsibility of each individual remains, but the Prophet can lead him on the Right and help him.

5. The Prophet also comes as a Light or a Lamp (Siraj) to illuminate the whole world. In 71:16 and elsewhere the same word (Siraj) is used for the sun.

The comparison is apt. When the sun appears, all the lesser lights pale before its light. And the Message of Islam, i.e., of the Universal Religion, is to diffuse Light everywhere.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيرًا (٤٧)

47. Then give the glad tidings to the Believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great Bounty.

C3736. The light of Islam is the Biggest Bounty possible and if they truly understand it, they should glory in it.

وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَدَعْ أَذَاهُمْ ...

48. And obey not (the behests) of the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites,
and heed not their annoyances,

C3737. Men of little or no Faith will often lay down the law and tell better men than themselves what to do. In case of refusal they shower insults and injuries. No attention is to be paid to them. It is their way. All will be right under the government of Allah.

... وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

but put thy trust in Allah,

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (٤٨)

for enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ

تَمْسُوهُنَّ ...

49. O ye who believe! when ye marry believing women, and then divorce them before ye have touched them,

...فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ نَعْتَدُونَهَا...

no period of 'Iddah have ye to count in respect of them:

C3738. See n. 254 to 2:228.

The **Iddat** counts for three monthly courses, or if there are no courses, for three months: see 65:4.

...فَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ...

so give them a present,

C3739. This present is held, by some, to be in addition to the half dower due to them under 2:237.

If the dower had not yet been fixed, the gift would presumably be larger, and it would absorb the gift prescribed in 2:236.

...وَسَرَّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا (٤٩)

and set them free in a handsome manner.

C3740. The gifts should be given with good grace, and the freedom of the woman should not be interfered with in any way. If she chooses to marry again immediately, no obstacle should be placed in her path.

On no pretext should she be allowed to remain doubtful about her freedom.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ ...

50. O prophet!

We have made lawful to thee

C3741. This introduces no new exemption or privilege. Verses 50-52 merely declare the points in which, on account of the special circumstances (see n. 3706 above), the Prophet's marriages differed from those of ordinary Muslims.

This is considered under four heads, which we shall examine in the four notes following.

... أَرْوَاجِكَ اللَّائِي آتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ...

- thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers;

C3742. Head 1.

Marriage with dower (4:4):

this is the universal Muslim marriage.

- The difference in the Prophet's case was that there was no limitation to the number of four (4:3),
- and women of the People of the Book (5:5) were not among his wives, but only Believers.

These points are not expressly mentioned here, but are inferred by his actual practice. Obviously women who are expected to instruct other women in Islam must be Muslims.

وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ...

- and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee;

C3743. Head 2.

Women Prisoners of War: the same remark as in the last note.

The point does not arise, as the whole condition and incidents of war have been altered and slavery has been abolished by international agreement.

...وَبَنَاتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَاتِكَ...

- and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts,

...اللَّائِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ...

who migrated (from Mecca) with thee;

C3744. Head 3.

These are first cousins, and not within the Prohibited Degrees of Marriage (see 4:23-24).

These are specially mentioned here by way of limitation. None of them could marry the Prophet unless she had performed the Hijrah with him. If she had not so performed it in spite of her close relationship, she could not be credited with any great fervour for Islam, or be considered suitable for instructing other women in Islam.

...وَأَمْرًا مُؤْمِنَةً إِنْ وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ
يَسْتَنْكِحَهَا...

- and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her --

C3745. Head 4.

A believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet:

obviously this case, like the last, is only applicable to the Prophet, and it is hedged round with the limitation that the Prophet considers it suitable and proper case of true service to the community, and not merely a sentimental woman's freak.

Some Commentators think there was no such case. But others with whom I agree, think that this applies to Zaynab bint Khutaymah, who had dedicated herself to the poor and was called the Mother of the Poor (Umm al masakin). Similarly, the last head might possibly refer to Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was a daughter of the Prophet's paternal aunt, herself a daughter of Abd al Muttalib.

...خَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large);

...قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ...

We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives

C3746. The ordinary law of Muslim marriage will be found chiefly in

2;221-228, 229-231, 232-235,

4:19-22, 23-25, 4:34-35, and 5:5.

...وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ...

and the captives whom their right hands possess -- in order that there should be no difficulty for Thee.

C3747. The words "this only for thee ... right hands possess" are parenthetical, and the words "in order that..." connect on with the previous clauses beginning with "O Prophet, We have made lawful wishes to wed her".

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٥٠)

And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3748. Marriage is an important relationship not only in our physical life, but in our moral and spiritual life, and its effects extend not only to the parties themselves but to children and future generations, A number of special problems arise according to special circumstances.

Every man and woman must seriously consider all sides of the question and must do the best in his or her power to temper instincts and inclinations with wisdom and guidance from Allah.

Allah wishes to make every one's path easy, for He is indeed "**Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful**".

ثُرْجِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ مِنْهُمْ وَتُؤْوِي إِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ...

51. Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest:

C3749. In [4:3](#) it is laid down that more than one wife is not permissible "if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them".

In a Muslim household there is no room for a "favourite wife" in the sense that such a wife is recipient of favours denied to other wives. In the special circumstances of the Prophet there were more than one, and he usually observed the rule of equality with them, in other things as well as in the rotation of conjugal rights.

But considering that his marriages after he was invested with the Prophetic office were mainly dictated by other

than conjugal or personal considerations (see [n. 3706. 33:28](#)), the rotation could not always be observed, though he observed it as much as possible. This verse absolves him from absolute adherence to a fixed rotation.

There are other interpretations, but I agree with most of the Commentators in the view I have explained. (R).

...وَمَنْ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ...

and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside.

C3750. Where the rotation was for some reason interfered with, it was permissible, by another interference with the usual rotation, to bring satisfaction to one who had been previously set aside.

This was not only permitted, but commended, as tending to remove dissatisfaction and cheer and comfort the eyes and hearts of those who were disappointed in their turn.

...ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ تَقْرَأَ أَعْيُنُهُنَّ ...

This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes,

C3751. Cooling the eyes: an Arabic idiom for cheering and comforting eyes which yearn to see those they love.

A verse of Zeb al Nisa, daughter of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, may be rendered thus:

"My heart is glad whenever lover-wise
I dwell upon thy beauties and thy grace!
But how can I content my hungry eyes,
That ask continually to see thy face?"

...وَلَا يَحْزَنَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَا آتَيْنَهُنَّ كُلَّهُنَّ ...

the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction -- that of all of them -- with that which thou hast to give them:

C3752. There was not much in the way of worldly goods or satisfaction that the Prophet could give them: see [33:28 above](#).

But he was kind, just, and true,-the best of men to his family, and they all clung to him.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَلِيمًا (٥١)

and Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts:

and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

C3753. Our human hearts, however good on the whole, may yet, in their motives, have possibly some baser admixture. The feminine hearts are not more immune in this respect than the masculine. But everything is known and understood by Allah. Who will in His mercy make all allowance for our human weaknesses. His title of "Most Forbearing" (Halim) also gives His devoted worshippers the cue: why should we not also forbear with the faults and weaknesses of our neighbors and fellow-creatures?

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدُ وَلَا أَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ ...

52. It is not lawful for thee (to marry more) women after this, nor to change them for (other) wives,

C3754. This was revealed in A.H. 7. After that the Prophet did not marry again, except the handmaiden Mary the Copt, who was sent as a present by the Christian Muqawqas of Egypt. She became the mother of Ibrahim, who died in his infancy.

...وَلَوْ أَغْبَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ ...

even though their beauty attract thee, except any thy right hand should possess (as handmaidens):

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَقِيبًا (٥٢)

and Allah doth watch over all things.

C.189 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:53-73)

*Believers should cultivate refined respect
In social and spiritual life. And the Mothers*

*Of the Faithful have to uphold their dignity,
 So should all women protect their honour
 And uphold their dignity. The Hour
 Will come when all Evil will be punished.
 Fear Allah, and always speak the word
 That leads to Right. Arduous is the Quest
 Of Mankind's high and noble Destiny-
 Beyond the reach of other creatures:
 Let man but strive in Faith, and fulfil
 Allah's Trust-by the grace and mercy of Allah.*

Section 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ...

53. O ye who Believe!

enter not the Prophet's houses --

...إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نَاطِرِينَ إِنَاءَهُ...

until leave is given you -- for a meal, (and then) not (so early as)
 to wait for its preparation:

C3755. The rules of refined social ethics is as necessary to teach to-day as it was with the rude Arabs whom the holy Prophet had to teach in his day. Those mentioned in this verse may be briefly recapitulated thus:

1. Enter not a friend's house without permission;
2. if invited to dine, don't go too early;
 you are asked to dine, not to wait for the preparation of the food;
3. be there at the time appointed, so that you enter when you are expected and invited;
4. after the meal, don't get familiar with your host, especially if there is a great distance between him and you;

5. don't waste time in tittle-tattle, causing inconvenience and perhaps annoyance to your host;
6. understand what is proper behaviour for you: he may be too polite to ask to depart.

All this has a spiritual as well as social bearing: respect and delicate consideration for others are among the highest virtues.

...وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا...

but when ye are invited, enter;

...فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ...

and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk.

...إِنَّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ...

Such (behavior) annoys the Prophet:

He is ashamed to dismiss you,

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth.

...وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ...

And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen:

C3756. The actual manner of showing respect to ladies may be different in different circumstances. But it is an essential principle of good society to show the greatest deference to them.

To the "Mothers of the Believers" this respect was due in an exceptional degree.

...ذَلِكَمُ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ...

that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs.

...وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ...

Nor is it right for you

C3757. Considering his position, the holy Prophet deserved to be respected before all other men and nothing should be done to cause him the least harm and annoyance.

This applied not only during his life-time, but it applies now, because his teaching and personality are alive to us.

It was not fitting that his widows, both for their own position and for the position of the Prophet, should be married by other men after him. And this mark of respect was duly observed in history.

... أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ...

that ye should annoy Allah's Messenger,

C3758. "Annoy": Adha' may equally mean:

- to vex,
- to cause hurt or injury,
- to insult,
- to ill-treat by slander or unseemly conduct, or hurt the feelings of (some one).

The Prophet came with a divine mission to teach and reclaim the world, and he is entitled to the respect of all, even of those who do not consciously acknowledge his mission, for his mission works constantly like the forces of nature.

In a minor degree the "Mothers of the Believers" are also entitled to respect.

...وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا...

or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time.

...إِنَّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (٥٣)

Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٥٤)

54. Whether ye reveal anything or conceal it, verily Allah has full knowledge of all things.

C3759. Respect or opposition may be shown overtly or in devious hidden ways. All good and evil are open before Allah, and He will take due account of everything.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِنَّ...

55. There is no blame (on these ladies if they appear) before
- their fathers or their sons,

C3760. This refers back to the Hijab (screen) portion of verse 53 above.

The list of those before whom the Prophet's wives could appear informally without a screen is their,

- fathers,
- sons,
- brothers,
- brothers' or sisters' sons,
- serving women,
- and household slaves or servants.

Commentators include uncles (paternal and maternal) under the heading of "fathers'.

Their women is held to mean all women who belonged to the Muslim community: other women were in the position of strangers, whom they received not so intimately, but with the formality of a screen as in the case of men.

Compare with this list and the wording here the list and the wording in 24:31, which applies to all Muslim women.

In the list here, husbands and husbands' relatives are not necessary to be mentioned, as we are speaking of a single household, that of the central figure in Islam, nor men-servants nor children, as there were none.

In the wording note that for Muslim women generally, no screen or *Hijab* (Pardah) is mentioned, but only a veil to cover the bosom, and modesty in dress. The screen was

a special feature of honour for the Prophet's household, introduced about five or six years before his death.

...وَلَا إِخْوَانَهُنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ...

- their brothers, or their brothers' sons,

...وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَائِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ...

- or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the (slaves) whom their right hands possess.

...وَاتَّقِينَ اللَّهَ...

And (ladies), fear Allah:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا (٥٥)

for Allah is Witness to all things.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ...

56. Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet:

C3761. Allah and His angels honour and bless the holy Prophet as the greatest of men. We are asked to honour and bless him all the more because he took upon himself to suffer the sorrows and afflictions of this life in order to guide us to Allah's Mercy and the highest inner Life.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٥٦)

O ye that believe!

send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

57. Those who annoy Allah and His Messenger -- Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter,

C3762. Cf. [n. 3758 above](#).

...وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا (٥٧)

and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغَيْرِ مَا كَتَبْنَا...

58. And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly,

...فَقَدْ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (٥٨)

bear (on themselves) a calumny and a glaring sin.

C3763. Cf. 4:112. In that passage we were told that any one who was himself guilty but accused an innocent man of his guilt, was obviously placing himself in double jeopardy;

- first, for his own original guilt, and
- secondly for the guilt of a false accusation.

Here we take two classes of men instead of two individuals.

The men and women of faith (if they deserve the name) and doing all they can to serve Allah and humanity. If they are insulted, hurt, or annoyed by those whose sins they denounce, the latter suffer the penalties of a double guilt, viz., their sins to start with, and the insults or injuries they offer to those who correct them. Instead of resenting the preaching of Truth, they should welcome it and profit by it.

Section 8

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأزْوَاجِكِ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

59. O prophet!

tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women,

C3764. This is for all Muslim women, those of the Prophet's household, as well as the others. They were asked to cover themselves with outer garments when walking around. (R).

...يُذْنِبْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيهِنَّ...

that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad):

C3765. Jilbab, plural **Jalabib**:

- an outer garment;
- a long gown covering the whole body,
- or a cloak covering the neck and bosom.

...ذَلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ...

that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested:

C3766. The object was not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation.

In the East and in the West a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women.

This can be traced back on the earliest civilisations. Assyrian Law in its palmiest days (say, 7th century B.C.), enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame:

see Cambridge Ancient History, 111. 107.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٥٩)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3767. That is, if a Muslim woman sincerely tries to observe this rule, but owing to human weakness fails short of the ideal, then "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful".(R).

لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ...

60. Truly, if the Hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease,

...وَالْمُرْجُؤُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ...

and those who stir up sedition in the City, desist not, We shall certainly stir thee up against them:

C3768. It was necessary to put down all kinds of unseemly conduct in the Prophet's City. And here is the

wanting in the plainest terms. And the warning had its effect.

The "**Hypocrites**" were men who pretended to be in Islam but whose manners and morals were anti-Islamic. Those "**with diseased hearts**" may have been the ones that molested innocent women.

"Those who stifled up sedition" put false rumours in circulation to excite the crowd.

Alas! we must ask ourselves the question: "Are these conditions present among us to-day?"

...ثُمَّ لَّا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٦٠)

then will they not be able to stay in it as thy neighbors for any length of time:

مَلْعُونِينَ...

61. They shall have a curse on them:

C3769. They will be deprived of the blessing and guidance of Allah.

They sought to cause disorder in Allah's world-moral as well as material; but they will themselves be destroyed.

Those who become outlaws, rebels against the Law, will themselves be destroyed by the Law. Capital punishment is the only adequate punishment for treason and crimes of sustained concerted violence - for the protection of the hearts and homes of innocent citizens and the honour of their women.

...أَيْنَمَا تَقْتُلُوا أَخْذُوا وَقْتَلُوا تَقْتِيلًا (٦١)

wherever they are found, they shall be seized and slain (without mercy).

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ...

62. (Such was) the practice (approved) of Allah among those who lived aforeside:

C3770. The Jewish law was much more severe: see notes [3703](#) and [3704](#) to [33:26](#). That severity is mitigated in Islam.

But it is a universal principle that any element which deliberately refuses to obey law and aggressively tries to subvert all order in society, secretly and openly, must be effectively suppressed, for the preservation of the life and health of the general community.

...وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا (٦٢)

no change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.

يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ...

63. Men ask thee concerning the Hour:

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ...

say, "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone)":

C3771. Cf. 7:187 and n. 1159, where the idea is further explained.

The knowledge of the Final Hour is with Allah alone.

The fact of its coming is certain; the exact time when it will come has not been revealed. If it were, it would disturb our thoughts and life.

"Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth."

But at any given moment it cannot be far distant.

In theological language, each individual's death is a Final Hour, a *Qiyamah Sughra* (Lesser Day of Judgement).

In that sense it is not the same for all individuals, and is certainly always near. "In the midst of life we are in death", as the Anglican Prayer-Book says in its Burial Service.

...وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا (٦٣)

and what will make thee understand? -- perchance the Hour is nigh!

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا (٦٤)

64. Verily Allah has cursed the Unbelievers and prepared for them a Blazing Fire --

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَّا...

65. To dwell therein forever:

يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٦٥)

no protector will they find, nor helper.

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ...

66. The Day that their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say:

C3772. The **face** is the expression of their Personality, their Self; and **turning upside down** is a sign of degradation and ignominy.

When the Retribution comes, the evil ones will be humiliated, and they will wish that they had followed right guidance when they had the chance. They will then fall to accusing their leaders who misled them. But they forget their own personal responsibility.

يَا لَيْتَنَّا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ (٦٦)

"Woe to us! would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger!"

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا (٦٧)

67. And they would say:

"Our Lord! we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us as to the (right) path.

رَبَّنَا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنَهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا (٦٨)

68. "Our Lord! give them Double Penalty and curse them with a very great Curse!"

C3773. Cf. 25:69 and n. 3129, and 11:20 and n. 1515.

The double Penalty invoked will be because:

- they went wrong themselves and
- they misled others.

Section 9

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ آذَوْا مُوسَى...

69. O ye who believe! be ye not like those who vexed and insulted Moses,

C3774. The people of Moses often vexed him and rebelled against him and against Allah's Law. Here the reference seems to be to Num. 12:1-13. It is there said that;

Moss's own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron spoke against Moses because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. Allah cleared Moses of the charge of having done anything wrong:

"My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house."

Miriam was afflicted with leprosy for seven days as a punishment, after which she was forgiven, as also was Aaron.

This is the Old Testament story.

The Holy Prophet was also attacked because of his marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh, but not by his own circle; his motives were of the highest and were completely vindicated as we have seen above.

...فَبَرَّاهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا ...

but Allah cleared him of the (calumnies) they had uttered:

...وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَحِيهَا (٦٩)

and he was honorable in Allah's sight.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَفُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا (٧٠)

70. O ye who believe! fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right:

C3775. We must not only speak the truth as far as we know it, but we must always try to hit the right point; i.e.,

we must not speak unseasonably, and when we do speak, we must not beat about the bush, but go straight to that which is right, in deed as well as in word.

Then Allah will make our conduct right and cure any defects that there may be in our knowledge and character. With our endeavour directed straight to the goal, we shall be forgiven our errors, shortcomings, faults, and sins of the past.

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ...

71. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins:

...وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (٧١)

he that obeys Allah and His Messenger has already attained the highest Achievement.

C3776. This is salvation, the attainment of our real spiritual desire or ambition, as we are on the highway to nearness to Allah.

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ ...

72. We did indeed offer the Trust

C3777. The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise.

There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.

... عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ ...

to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains:

C3778. What is the meaning of the offer of the Trust to the Heaven, the Earth, and the Mountains?

Cf. 59:21, where the hypothetical sending down of the Quran to the Mountains is mentioned, and it is

mentioned that such Parables are put forth in order to aid men to reflection.

We may therefore take the Mountains the Earth, and the Heavens as symbolical.

The mountains stand for firmness and stability: they have been created for the quality, and they are always true to that quality. An earthquake or a volcano has to do with movements within the earth's crust: it has nothing to do with the Mountain's will. In fact it has no free will of any kind: there is no question of any Trust here.

If we take the Earth as a whole, as a part of the solar system or a compendium of the terrestrial Nature we see around us, it obeys the fixed laws of Allah, and there is no Will or Trust.

If we take the Heaven either as celestial space, or as symbolical of the Angels, they absolutely obey Allah's Will and law: they have no will of their own.

...قَابِلِينَ...

but they refused

C3779. The Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, i.e. other creatures of Allah, besides man, refused to undertake a Trust or a responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will.

In saying that **they refused**, we imply a will, but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil.

They preferred to submit their will entirely to Allah's Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge.

Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted: the evil ones have betrayed the Trust and brought Punishment on themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above other Creation, to be

the **muqarrabin**, the nearest ones to Allah: 56:11 and 56:88.

What can be higher than this for any creature?

It follows incidentally from this that the Heavens and the Earth were created before man was created and this is in accordance with what we know of the physical world in science: man came on the scene at a comparatively late stage.

... أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا ...

to undertake it, being afraid thereof:

C3780. Hamala: to undertake, bear, carry (the Trust or responsibility), to be equal to it.

This is the ordinary meaning, and the majority of Commentators construe so.

But some understand it to mean -

"to carry away, run away with, to embezzle (the thing entrusted); hence to be false to the Trust, to betray the Trust."

In that case the sense of verses 72-73 would be: -

"Allah offered the Trust to other creatures, but they refused, lest they should betray it, being afraid from that point of view: but man was less fair to himself: in his ignorance he accepted and betrayed the Trust, with the result that some of his race became Hypocrites and Unbelievers and were punished, though others were faithful to the Trust and received Allah's Mercy".

The resulting conclusion is the same under both interpretations.

... وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ ...

but man undertook it --

C3781. See 2:30-34 and n.47, nn.48-49.

Allah intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but

in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts.

What was it that made man so high and noble?

The differentiating quality which Allah gave man was that Allah breathed something of His own spirit into man (32:9; 15:29 and n. 1968; and other passages).

This meant that man was given a limited choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of Forbearance, Love, and Mercy. And in himself man summed up Allah's great world: man is in himself a microcosm.

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا (٧٢)

he was indeed unjust and foolish --

C3782. That man should undertake the God-like attributes (in however small a degree) of Will, Forbearance, Love and Mercy, brought him nearer to Allah than was possible for any other creature of Allah.

This was part of Allah's Will and Plan, but little did man realize then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself whether he would be equal to it.

Zalum (translated -unjust-) and **Jahul** (ignorant) are both in the Arabic intensive form; as much as to say, 'man signally failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge. But Allah's Grace came to his assistance. Where man did his best, he won through by Allah's Grace, even though man's Best was but a poor Good.

How did man generically undertake this great Responsibility, which made him Vicegerent on earth (2:30)?

Here comes in the doctrine of a Covenant, express or implied, between Allah and Humanity. See 7:172,173 and notes 1146-48 also 5:1 and n. 682.

A Covenant (**Mithaq**) necessarily implies Trust, and its breach necessarily implies Punishment.

لِيُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ...

73. (With the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women,

C3783. Man's generic Covenant, which flowed from his exercising the option given him, choosing Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, made it necessary that breach of it should carry its own punishment.

Breach of it is here classed under two heads:

those who betray their Trust act either as Hypocrites or as Unbelievers.

- Hypocrites are those who profess Faith but bring not forth the fruits of Faith.
- Unbelievers are those who openly defy Faith, and from whom therefore no fruits of Faith are to be expected.

...وَيُنُوبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

and Allah turns in Mercy to the Believers, men and women:

C3784. Those who remain firm to their Faith and their Covenant (see [notes 3781-82](#)) will receive the aid of Allah's Grace; their faults and weaknesses will be cured; and they will be made worthy of their exalted Destiny. For Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful.

So ends a Surah which deals with the greatest complications and misunderstandings in our throbbing life here below, and points upwards to the Great Achievement, the highest Salvation.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٧٣)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.



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Zahid Javed Rana, Abid Javed Rana

Lahore, Pakistan

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