

measure He wills, He would bestow such information on His angels, messengers and favored servants. These are called "أَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْبِ" (*anbā 'ul-ghayb*) in the noble Qur'ān, for instance: *تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ* (These are some reports from the Unseen (events) which We reveal to you - 11:49).

Therefore, the Ḥadīth quoted above means that, no doubt, Allah Ta'ālā has made these five things so exclusive to Himself that no angel or messenger has been given their knowledge even as 'news' of the unseen. However, besides these, a fair amount of the knowledge relating to other unseen things is given out to the blessed prophets through the medium of *wahy* (revelation).

Thus, from what has been discussed above, we now know one more reason why these five things have been mentioned specially.

### A doubt and its answer

The cited verse proves that even in the absolute knowledge of the unseen which is an integral attribute of Allah Ta'ālā there are five particular things the knowledge of which is not given to any prophet even through *wahy* (revelation). This demands that these things should never become known to anyone. However, countless events relating to men of Allah (*auliyā*) in the Muslim community have been reported to the effect that somewhere they gave the news of rain, or pregnancy, or someone doing or not doing a deed in the future, or someone's exact place of death. And this foreboding turned out to be true as well when observed.

Similarly, there are some astrologers or people well versed in the art of divination through what is known as *Jafar* and *Ramal* who would come up with some bits of information about these things and these, at some times, would turn out to be true as well. This raises the question: How, then, could these five things remain exclusive to Divine Knowledge?

One answer to this question is the same as has appeared in details under our Commentary on Sūrah An-Naml (27:65, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). A brief one has been given above to the effect that the Knowledge of the Unseen, in its real sense, is knowledge without the mediation of a physical cause - that is, *sans* medium, by itself. If these things are received by the blessed prophets through *wahy* (revelation), by men of Allah (*auliyā*) through *ilhām* (inspiration) and by astrologers and other

claimants to divination or prediction through their calculations and physical causes, then, that is no knowledge of the unseen as such. Instead, these are 'news' of the unseen. If someone from among the creation of Allah were to receive such news relating to some partial or personal matter, it would not be contradictory of the cited verse. The reason is simple. According to the substance of the verse, the total knowledge of these five things, a knowledge which comprehends everything created as well as every relative condition, is something not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone, neither through *wahy* (revelation) nor through *ilhām* (inspiration). That someone gets to receive some partial knowledge through *ilhām* (inspiration) in a stray case is not contradictory to it.

In addition to that, when we say '*ilm* (knowledge), it means absolute knowledge. That no one has except Allah Ta'ālā. The knowledge a man of Allah (*waliyy*) receives through *ilhām* (inspiration) is not absolute. Many probabilities of error or false perception exist in it. As for the information given out by astrologers and their ilk, it is a common observation that they hardly come up to the level of a single truth out of ten lies. How can that be called 'absolute knowledge'?

### **The issue of the Knowledge of the Unseen: An important note**

My respected teacher, Shaykh ul-Islām Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī has made a brief but comprehensive comment in his explanatory notes on the Holy Qur'ān which helps remove all doubts and difficulties of the nature mentioned above. He has said that there are two kinds of *al-Ghayb* (the unseen): (1) Injunctions of the unseen (*al- aḥkām ul-ghaybiyyah*), such as, the injunctions originating from revealed laws that include the knowledge of the Being and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā as well and are called the knowledge of beliefs (*al-'aqā'id*). Also included therein are all injunctions of the Shari'ah or revealed law which tell us as to what sort of conduct meets the approval or disapproval of Allah Ta'ālā. It goes without saying that all these things belong to nowhere but the unseen.

(2) Cosmology of the unseen (*al-akwān ul-ghaybiyyah*), that is, the knowledge of the events occurring in the world. The knowledge of the unseen things of the first kind has been given by Allah Ta'ālā to His prophets and messengers. This is mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words: *فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ* : '(He is the) Knower of

the Unseen. So He does not let anyone know His Unseen, except a messenger whom He chooses (to inform through revelation) - 72:26-27.

As for the unseen events and occurrences of the other kind, their knowledge - the whole of it - is just not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone. That remains categorically exclusive to Him as His intrinsic attribute. But, He gives partial knowledge of particular events when He wills and as much He wills. As such, the real knowledge of the unseen - all of it - remains exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, as is His customary practice, He reveals to the blessed prophets the knowledge of the injunctions of the unseen from out of His knowledge of the unseen - and this very knowledge is the purpose of their mission. Then, there is the partial knowledge of the events and occurrences of the world. That too is given by Allah Ta'ālā to prophets through revelation (*wahy*) and men of Allah (*auliyā'*) through inspiration (*ilhām*) at His discretion and to the measure of His choice. Thus, the part of knowledge so given is knowledge that has been bestowed on them by Allah Ta'ālā. In the real sense, this cannot be called: علم الغيب (*'ilm ul-ghayb*: the knowledge of the unseen). Instead, it is called: انباء الغيب : "*an[m]bā' il-ghayb*: the news of the unseen."

### Special note concerning the words of the verse

In this verse, the objective is to describe the exclusiveness of the knowledge of these five things with Allah Ta'ālā in a manner that shows marked care and attention. This objective obviously required that five things should have been enumerated under a single head saying that their knowledge is exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā and that no created entity has been given their knowledge. But, in the cited verse, this was not done. Instead, as for the knowledge of the initial three things, it was mentioned positively as being exclusive to Allah - while, in the later two things, the statement was negative declaring that no one other than Allah has their knowledge. Let us go back to the initial three things. Here, a variation in style becomes fairly visible even in these three. We see that the knowledge of the Hour has been mentioned in the following manner: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ (Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour). Then the mode changes. The second thing has been taken up in the form of a verbal sentence by saying: يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ (and He sends down the rain). It simply has no mention of the knowledge of rain. Instead, it mentions the sending down of rain. The third thing was mentioned with a

changed mode once again and it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs). This change of modality can only be taken as a sampling of versatility in eloquence of speech. If one were to ponder, there are other elements of wisdom embedded here. The respected author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has described these in his Tafsīr.

In brief, the last two things - what will one earn tomorrow and in which land will one die - are states connected with the human person. It was probable that one would try to seek the relevant knowledge about these. Therefore, in both these cases, the acquiring of such knowledge on the part of anyone other than Allah was negated. Also proved effectively through this statement was the absence of the knowledge of the first three things for anyone other than Allah. The argument was simple. Here is someone who does not know about his doings and earnings tomorrow. Then, he does not know the end of it all, the point when and where he will die. How could he, then, be expected to know the heavens and the coming of rains and the thing hidden in the dark layers of a mother's womb? Finally, when mentioning the last thing, it was said that one does not know the place of one's death. Yes, the text mentions 'place' only - although, one does not know one's time of death too just like the place of death. The reason is that the place of death, even if not known definitely, is something one can guess in terms of one's outward living conditions. One can naturally assume that the place where one is settled would be the place where one would die, and at the least, the place where one is to die is, after all, present somewhere in the world. This is contrary to the time of death. This time is in the future and the future is not here yet. So, a person who cannot know about his place of death, despite that it is present actually, how can it be imagined about him that he would come to know his time of death which simply does not exist then?

So, the negation of one thing here makes the negation of others obvious in the first degree. Therefore, the text takes up both these things in the negative mode. As for the first three things, they are by themselves outside the scope of human access under perceptible conditions. That human knowledge has nothing to do with it is all too clear. Therefore, a positive mode was chosen to describe their exclusiveness to Allah Ta'ālā.

Before parting with the subject, a few words about the use of nominal form in the first sentence and the verbal one in the later two sentences

may be useful. Perhaps, the wisdom therein is to suggest that the Qiyāmah or the Last Day is a definite imperative with no change in it. This is contrary to the coming of rain and the period of pregnancy. Their conditions keep changing - and the verbal sentence is suggestive of change. Therefore, that is what was used in both these cases. Then, we notice a delicacy of treatment within these two as well. When dealing with the conditions of pregnancy, what was mentioned was Divine knowledge: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs - 34) while in taking up the subject of the coming of rain, there is just no mention of knowledge. There is a reason for it. Here, by mentioning the sending down of rain, it was tacitly suggested that the rain to which are tied thousands of human benefits is something that comes at the bidding of Allah alone and that no one else exercises the ultimate control over it. As for the essential exclusiveness of its knowledge being with Allah, it already stands proved from the very context of the statement. ...

**Alhamdulillah**  
**The Commentary on**  
**Sūrah Luqmān**  
**Ends here**

# Sūrah As-Sajdah

[The Prostration]

Sūrah As-Sajdah is Makkī. It has 30 Verses and 10 Sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Verses 1 - 3

الْم ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَأَرِيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] (This) revelation of the Book - wherein there is no doubt - is from the Lord of the worlds. [2] Or, is it that they say, "he has fabricated it." On the contrary, it is the truth from your Lord, so that you warn a people to whom no warner has come before you; may be they take the right path. [3]

## Commentary

At this place, the word: نَذِيْرٍ (*nadhīr*: warner) in: مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِنْ نَّذِيْرٍ (to whom no warner has come.. -3) means a *rasūl* or messenger. The sense is that no messenger had appeared amidst the Quraish of Makkah before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This does not mean that the call of the messengers had just not reached them until that time, because it was clearly said in another verse of the Qur'an: وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيْهَا نَذِيْرٌ (And there was no community without a warner having passed among them - 35:24). In this verse, (i.e. the verse 35:24) the word: نَذِيْرٍ (*warner*) appears in its general lexical sense, that is, one who calls people towards Allah, whether a messenger or prophet or one of their deputies, *khalīfah* or the *‘alim* of *dīn*. So, from this verse, it seems that the call of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*) had reached all

communities and groups. That is correct in its place and certainly the dictate of universal Divine mercy. Commentator Abū Ḥayyān says that the call to *tauḥīd* and *'imān* has never ceased in any time or place or people. And wherever a long time passed after the appearance of a prophet, it resulted in the dearth of those having the knowledge of the legacy of prophethood. Thereupon, some new prophet or messenger was sent. This requires that the call to *tauḥīd* should have reached the Arab peoples definitely, and much earlier. But, for this it is not necessary that the call should have been brought in by some prophet or messenger in person. It is possible that it may have reached through the learned serving as deputies to the prophetic mission. Therefore, the verses of this Sūrah, Sūrah Yā Sīn and others which prove that no *nadhīr* (warner) had appeared amidst the Quraish of Arabia before the Holy Prophet ﷺ must be approached with the necessary consideration that the word: نذير (*nadhīr*) used there should mean a prophet and messenger in the technical sense denoting that no prophet and messenger had come amidst those people before the Holy Prophet ﷺ - even though, the call to *tauḥīd* and *'imān* may have reached there too through other means.

Before the period of فترة *fatrah*, that is, before the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it stands proved about some blessed souls who firmly adhered to the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl عليهما السلام. They believed in the Oneness of Allah and were averse to the worship of and sacrifices for idols.

Ruḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports from the Maghāzī of Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah about one such person whose name was Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl. He had also met the Holy Prophet ﷺ before he was ordained as a prophet. But, it was still before his prophethood that he died in the year the Quraish had built the edifice of the Baytullah - and this happened five years prior to his prophethood. About him, Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah says, 'He used to stop the Quraish from indulging in the worship of idols. He opposed the offering of sacrifices in the name of idols as an evil practice and would not eat the meat from animals slaughtered by the Mushriks.'

Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālīsī has reported from Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Zayd Ibn Amr ﷺ, the son of Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl, one of the celebrated ten (عشرة مبشرة) among the noble Ṣaḥābah, that he had submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying: "You already know about my father that he

adhered to pure monotheism and rejected idolatry. Can I, then, pray for his forgiveness?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, for him the prayer of forgiveness is permissible. He will, on the day of Qiyāmah, rise as a community of his own." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, Warqah Ibn Nawfal ؓ who was present during the initial period of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'ān was an adherent of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*). He had expressed his resolve to help the Holy Prophet ﷺ but he died soon after. These examples prove that the people of Arabia were though not totally deprived of the Divine call to faith and monotheism, but that no prophet had appeared amidst them as such. Allah knows best.

All three verses cited above carry an affirmation of the veracity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam.

#### Verses 4 - 9

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤﴾ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٥﴾ ذَلِكَ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٦﴾ الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, then He positioned Himself on the Throne. Other than Him, there is neither a guardian for you, nor an intercessor. Would you then not observe the advice? [4] He manages (every) matter from the sky to the earth, then it (every matter) will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you



count. [5] That One is the All-knower of the unseen and the seen; the All-Mighty, the Very-Merciful, [6] who made well whatever He created and started the creation of man from clay. [7] Then He made his progeny from a drop of semen, from a despised water. [8] Then He gave him a proportioned shape and breathed into him of His spirit. And He granted you the (power of) hearing and the eyes and the hearts. Little you give thanks. [9]

## Commentary

### The length of the day of Qiyāmah

The text in verse 5 cited above says: فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you count - 5). And it appears in a verse of Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij: ... (in a day the extent of which is fifty thousand years - 70:4).

A simple explanation of this is what appears in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān - since this day will be horrendous, people would find it very long. Then, this length will be felt in terms of one's measure of faith and deeds. Big criminals will find the day longer while the small ones will find it comparatively shorter, so much so that the day some would feel to be of a thousand years, to others, it would appear as of fifty thousand years.

Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports several other explanations from the 'Ulamā' and Sūfiyā'. But, all these are nothing but conjectures. Something which can be traced back to a proved meaning of the Qur'ān or something which can be believed in is just not there. Therefore, the most sound approach in this matter is the same as was taken by the early elders of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'in: They had left the knowledge of this difference of one and fifty to Allah without explaining it on the basis of human whims and, on their part, they had found it sufficient to say, 'we do not know.'

About it, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said:

هُمَا يَوْمَانِ ذَكَرَهُمَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِي كِتَابِهِ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَعْلَمُ بِهِمَا وَأَكْرَهُ أَنْ أَقُولَ فِي  
كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا أَعْلَمُ

They are two days mentioned by Allah Ta'ālā in His Book. Allah Ta'ālā knows best about them and I dislike to say in the matter of the Book of Allah that which I do not know.

Everything is good in this world. Evil comes through its wrong use.

In verse 7, it was said: "الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ": "Who made well whatever He created good. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has made whatever He has created in this world under the dictate of His wisdom, and under the essential consideration of what is beneficial for the whole system. Therefore, everything has a beauty of its own. And the most beautiful and better than all is the making of man as it was said: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (Surely, We did create man in the best of symmetry - 95:4).

Then there are creations other than man that may outwardly be taken as bad. In fact, dogs, pigs, snakes, scorpions and wolfs are commonly considered bad because they are either poisonous or beastly. But, in terms of the expedient benefits of the world as a whole, none of these is really bad. A proverbial poetic observation in Urdu puts it as:

نہیں ہے چیز نکمی کوئی زمانے میں.....☆.....کوئی برائیں قدرت کے کارخانے میں

There is nothing useless in the world  
There is no one bad in the workshop of nature.

The author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has said, 'the text's كُلُّ شَيْءٍ (whatever) includes all substances and accidents, that is, also things which have corporeal substance, such as, animals, plants and minerals etc. as well as incorporeal things which include even morals and deeds. So much so that morals which are identified as bad - anger, greed, desire and their likes - are not bad in themselves. The bad about them emerges when they are used out of place. If they stay in their proper place, there is nothing bad in them. But, the sense being driven home here relates to the objective of their creation ( *takwīn* ) and introduction of these things - for that is nothing but good according to divine wisdom. However, the qualities of 'good' and 'bad' are attached to them in relation to the human acts and their effects on individuals. We can call it one's right or choice employed in doing something. Then, in those terms, everything is not good, in fact, it is circumscribed by a little detail, that is, whatever has not been allowed by Allah Ta'ālā is not good, but is, rather bad.' Allah knows best.

The sentence that follows next reads: وَيَدَأْ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ طِينٍ (and started the creation of man from clay - 7). Earlier, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā has made everything 'good' in this world. Mentioned thereafter was man,

the most beautiful of all. Then, to give expression to His most perfect power alongside, it was also said that the making of man as the most superior form of creation was not because the essential ingredient of his creation was most noble, elegant and superior, which may have made it so. In fact, as for the essential ingredient that went into his making, it was something as mean and lowly as the semen. Thereafter, the rest was a masterpiece of His perfect power and profound wisdom. It was this great combination that took something so low to such a height that man was rated as the most noble Divine creation.

### Verses 10 - 22

وَقَالُوا ءَ إِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ  
بِلِقَائِ رَبِّهِمْ كَفِرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ يَتَوَقَّعُكُمْ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ  
بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا  
رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا  
إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدًىٰ وَلَكِن حَقَّ  
الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣﴾  
فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا ۗ إِنَّا نَسِينَكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ  
الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا  
بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾  
تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۗ وَمِمَّا  
رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ۗ  
جَزَاءً مِّمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ  
فَاسِقًا لَا يَسْتَوُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ  
جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَىٰ نُزُلًا ۗ مِمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا  
فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ ۗ كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَقِيلَ

لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَنذِيقَنَّهُمْ  
 مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الَّاذْنَىٰ ذُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾  
 وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ  
 مُنْتَقِمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And they said, "Is it that when we disappear in the earth, shall we really come into a new creation?" Rather they are ones who deny the meeting with their Lord. [10] Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full, then you will be brought back to your Lord." [11] And (you will wonder) if you see the sinners hanging their heads before their Lord (and saying,) "Our Lord, we have now seen and heard, so send us back, and we will do righteous deeds. Surely, (now) we are believers." [12] And if We had so willed, We would have given everybody his right way (by force), but the word from Me had come to pass: "I will certainly fill the *Jahannam* with jinn and human beings together.: [13]

So, have a taste, because you had forgotten the meeting of this day of yours. We have forgotten you. And taste the eternal punishment for what you used to do. [14] Only those people believe in Our verses who, when they are reminded of them, fall in prostration and pronounce the purity with praise of their Lord, and they do not wax proud. [15] Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope, and spend from what We have given to them. [16] So no one knows what delight of eyes has been reserved for them in secret, as a reward of what they used to do. [17]

So, can one who is a believer become like one who is a sinner? They cannot become equal. [18] As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there are gardens to dwell, an honorable hospitality, for what they used to do. [19] And the ones who disobeyed, their abode is the Fire. Whenever they wish to come out from it, they will be turned back to it, and it will be said to them, "Taste the punishment of fire that you used to deny." [20] And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return. [21] And who is more unjust than

the one who was reminded of the verses of his Lord, then he turned away from them. Surely, We have to take vengeance upon the sinners. [22]

### Commentary

In verse 11, it was said: *قُلْ يَتَوَفَّكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ* (Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full" - 11). In the verse previous to it, the deniers of the Qiyāmah were warned and an answer was given to their wondering as to how would they be brought back to life once again after they had died and become dust. In the verse cited above, such people are being reminded, 'Think of your death which is, in itself, a great manifestation of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Your heedlessness and ignorance make you think that one's death comes all by itself, just like that. This is not how it is. In fact, fixed for your death there is a time with Allah and for this there is a standing system run through angels. Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام is the foremost among them, the one who is the master-manager of death throughout the world. Whenever and wherever a person is destined to die, it is precisely at that time that he draws out his soul from his body.' This is what has been stated in the cited verse. It should be noted that *مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ* (*malakul-maut*: angel of death) has been mentioned in the singular form. It means Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام. Please compare it with another verse where it is said: *الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّهُم الْمَلَائِكَةُ* (the ones to whom the angels brought death - 16:28). Here, the word: *مَلَائِكِهِ* (*malā'ikah*: angels) has been used in the plural form. This releases the hint that Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام does not do this alone. Many angels under him take part in accomplishing this duty.

### Some details about the Exacting of Soul and the Angel of Death

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid has said, 'before the angel of death, the whole world is very much like an open tray before a human being sprinkled in which there are grains and he picks up whichever he wants.' The same subject has also appeared in a *marfū' ḥadīth*, that is, traceable to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī in At-tadhkirah)

According to a *ḥadīth*, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the angel of death standing behind the head of an Anṣārī *ṣaḥābī* on his death bed. He said, 'make it easy on my *ṣaḥābī*.' The angel of death said, 'Rest assured. I make it easy on every believer,' then, he added, 'just imagine the number of people living in towns or villages and in forests, mountains or waters, I

see every one of them five times a day, therefore, I am directly acquainted with everyone of them, young or old.' Then, he concluded by saying, 'O Muḥammad ﷺ, all this I am telling you about is nothing but what happens with the will and command of Allah. Otherwise, if I wanted to take the life of even a mosquito, I do not have the power to do so - unless there comes the very command of Allah Ta'ālā that I have to do it.'

### **The soul of animals: Does the angel of death exact that too?**

From the *ḥadīth* report mentioned above, it seems that it is the angel of death who, subject to Divine permission, exacts the soul of a mosquito too. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also said this while answering a question. But, some other reports show that this exacting of the soul is particular to human beings - because of their nobility and distinction. As for the animals, they will die under Divine will without the medium of the angel. (Mentioned by Ibn 'Atiyyah from al-Qurṭubī)

The same subject has been reported by Abū ash-Shaikh, 'Uqailī, Dailamī and others on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ narrating it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to this report, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All animals and insects keep glorifying Allah (for this is their life). When this glorification stops, Allah Ta'ālā takes their soul. The death of animals has not been entrusted with the angel of death". Another related *ḥadīth* has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ. (Maḥzarī)

It appears in yet another *ḥadīth*, 'when Allah Ta'ālā handed over to Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īل العزرايلى the charge of managing the death of everyone in the world, he pleaded, "O my Lord, You have put such a service in my charge that the entire race of the children of 'Ādam living in the world is going to give me a bad name to the extent that every time I am remembered, I shall be dubbed as evil." Allah Ta'ālā would say, "We have taken care of that by placing some obvious diseases and causes of death in the world due to which everyone will attribute death to these diseases and causes and you will remain safe from their adverse comments." (Al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr and Al-tadhkirah)

And Imām al-Baghawī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All diseases, and things like pain and wound, are the universal message-bearers of death. They remind every human being of his or her death. After that, when comes

the time of death, the angel of death turns towards the dying person and says, 'O servant of God, how many notices have I served on you and how many message-bearers have I sent to you one after the other! All these diseases and accidents delivered at your doors were simply to warn you that you should get ready for death. Now, here I am after whom no bearer of some message will come to you any more. Now you have got to say yes to the order of your Lord necessarily, whether willingly or unwillingly.' (Maḡharī)

### Ruling:

The angel of death does not know the time of anyone's death in advance - until he is ordered to exact the soul of a certain person. (Deduced by Aḡmad and Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā from Ma'mar, Maḡharī)

Before approaching verse 16: *تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا* (Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope - 16), it should be borne in mind that disbelievers, Mushriks and the deniers of the day of Qiyāmah were warned in the verses previous to it. After that, starting from: *إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا* (Only those people believe in Our verses - 15) mentioned there are special attributes of sincere believers and the high ranks reserved for them. Pointed to in the cited verse is one such attribute of these believers: They leave the comfort of their beds, rise and get busy with the remembrance of Allah in submission and supplication - because, they are apprehensive of His displeasure and punishment while remaining hopeful of His mercy and reward. This very combination of fear and hope keeps them returning to Dhikr and Du'ā' repeatedly, anxiously and animated at the same time.

### The Ṣalāh of Tahajjud

The majority of commentators takes the expression denoting the leaving of beds and getting busy with Dhikr and Du'ā' to mean the Ṣalāh of *Tahajjud* and *Nawāfil* that are offered after rising from sleep (which is the saying of al-Ḥasan, Muḡahid, Mālik and al-Awza'i). And it is supported by narrations of Ḥadīth as well.

According to a report in the Musnad of Aḡmad, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī and others, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه narrates: 'Once I was in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on a journey. One morning during the course of the journey when I was near him, I requested: "Yā Rasūlallah,

tell me to do something which helps me enter Paradise and keeps me away from Hell." He said, "You asked for something very difficult. But, for whomsoever Allah Ta'ālā makes it easy, for him it becomes easy." Then he said, "This is what you should do: Worship Allah and associate no one with Him, and establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and keep the fasts of Ramaḍān, and perform the Ḥajj of Baytullah." And then he said, "Here, now let me tell you about the gateways of righteousness: Fasting is a shield (that saves you from punishment). *Ṣadaqah* puts off the fire of one's sins - so does one's Ṣalāh in the middle of the night." And after having said that, he recited the cited verse of the Holy Qur'an: تَنَجَّافِي جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16).

Sayyidnā Abū ad-Dardā', Qatādah and Ḍahhāk رضى الله عنهم اجمعين have said that this attribute of sides remaining apart from beds also applies to those who make their Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' with Jamā'ah and then go on to make their Ṣalāh of Fajr with Jamā'ah. And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه appearing in Tirmidhī with sound chains of authority, this verse: تَنَجَّافِي جُنُوبُهُمْ (Their sides remain apart) was revealed about people who do not sleep before the Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' and keep waiting for the Jamā'ah of 'Ishā'.

And according to some other reports, this verse is about people who offer *nawāfil* between Maghrib and 'Ishā' (reported by Muḥammad Ibn Naṣr). And about this verse, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: People who would, on waking up, remember Allah - lying, sitting and on sides - are also included therein.

Ibn Kathīr and other Tafsīr authorities have said that there is no contradiction in all these sayings. It is correct to say that this verse is inclusive of all - while the late night Ṣalāh remains the superior most. Bayān ul-Qur'an has also opted for this approach.

And Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd رضى الله عنها narrates: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'when Allah Ta'ālā will gather everyone from the first to the last, a proclaimer whose call will be heard by the entire creation will call: 'This day everyone on the plains of Resurrection will find out as to who is really deserving of honor and compliment.' Then, the proclaiming angel will proclaim: 'O people assembled on the plains of Resurrection, let those rise from among you, those whose attribute was: تَنَجَّافِي جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ



الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16)'. At this call, these people will stand up, though their number will be small. (Ibn Kathīr) And some words of the same narration say that these people will be sent to Paradise without reckoning. After that, all others will stand and face reckoning. (Mazhari)

In verse 21:

وَلَنذِيقَنَّهٖم مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْآدِنِيِّ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْآكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

(And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return),

the word: آدِنِيّ (*adnā*) has been used in the sense of 'nearer' and العذاب الآدِنِيّ (*al-'adhāb-ul-adnā*) denotes diseases, sufferings and calamities of the world that are made to befall a lot of people by Allah Ta'ālā in order to warn them against their sins. The purpose is to chasten and alert them enough so that they leave off their sins and thus earn their deliverance from the Great Punishment of the Hereafter.

Hence, this verse seems to tell us that all these sufferings, accidents, diseases and pains that inflict sinners in the world are nothing but a sort of mercy for them in as much as they help them get out of their heedlessness and save themselves from the punishment of the 'Ākhirah. However, for people who take no lesson even from such unwelcome happenings and fail to turn to Allah, for them, this punishment becomes twofold - first, the cash punishment right here in this world and then, the other being the Great Punishment of the Hereafter. As for the hardships of many kinds that come upon prophets and men of Allah, that is a separate matter. These hardships are a trial for them and trials are the source through which their ranks are raised. What is the hallmark of this trial? How do you recognize the quality of their response? If one were to observe such people even under the stress of calamities and hardships, it will be noticed that they have a kind of peace and tranquility emanating from their trust in Allah Ta'ālā. And it is Allah who knows best.

**There are some crimes the punishment of which comes even within the mortal world much before the Hereafter.**

The last sentence of the set of verses cited above reads: إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ (We have to take vengeance upon the sinners - 22). Obviously, the word: الْمُجْرِمِينَ (*al-mujrimīn*: the criminals) includes all kinds of criminals.

Then, the word: *إِنْتِقَامٌ* (*intiḳām*: revenge, retribution, return) is also general. It may be in the mortal world or in the Hereafter or in both. But, from some Ḥadith accounts it appears that there are three sins the punishment of which is experienced - before the Hereafter - right here in this world too. They are: (1) To strive against what is Right and True publicly with flags and slogans; (2) To disobey parents; (3) To help someone unjust or oppressive. (Reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه)

### Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تُكِنُّ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَائِهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ يَلْ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ ۗ أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا تَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ أَنْعَامُهُمْ وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ ۗ أَفَلَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُمْ وَانْتَظِرُوا أَنَّهُمْ مُنْتَظَرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And We did give the Book to Mūsā, so do not be in doubt about receiving it, and We made it a guidance for the children of Isra'īl. [23] And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses. [24] Surely, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment in what they used to differ. [25] Has it not been a source of guidance for them as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely in this there are signs. So, do they not listen? [26] Have

they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby from which their cattle and they themselves have food? So, do they not observe? [27] And they say, "When will this decision take place?" [28] Say, "On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers, nor shall they be given any respite." [29] So, turn away from them and wait. They (too) are waiting. [30]

### Commentary

The word: لقاء (*liqā'*) in the first verse (23) cited above: فَلَا تَكُنْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَائِهِ (so do not be in doubt about receiving it) means meeting. Whose meeting with whom? In determining it precisely in the verse, the sayings of commentators differ. According to one of these, the pronoun in: لِّقَائِهِ (*liqā'ihī*) has been taken to be reverting to: الْكِتَابَ (*al-kitāb*: the Book), that is, the Qur'ān, which releases the sense that 'the way Allah Ta'ālā gave the Book to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, you too should entertain no doubt about receiving your Book.' This is supported by similar words used about the Qur'an in another verse: وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ (And indeed you [O Muḥammad] do receive the Qur'ān - An-Naml, 27:6) (Bayān ul-Qur'ān, Khulāṣah Tafsīr)

On the other hand, its *tafsīr* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah رضي الله عنهم اجمعين has been reported as follows: The pronoun in: لِّقَائِهِ (*liqā'ihī*: read as 'meeting him') reverts to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and given in this verse is the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be meeting Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and it has been said that he should have no doubt in the eventuality of his meeting with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Accordingly, a meeting in the night of al-Mi'rāj (the ascent to the heavens) stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. Then, also proved is the meeting on the day of Qiyāmah.

And Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى explains it by saying: The way Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given a Book, then people belied and harassed him, the prophet of Islam too should anticipate that he will have to face similar treatment at the hands of his people. Therefore, he should not grieve over the pains inflicted by disbelievers. In fact, he should take that as the blessed practice of prophets, and endure.

### Two conditions for the leader of any people

In the next verse (24), it was said:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ إِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا تَتَّبِعُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

(And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses).

In this verse, two reasons have been given as to why religious leadership was bestowed on some of the sages of Banī Isrā'īl: (1) Observance of patience and (2) the certitude of Divine words. In terms of the Arabic usage, the sense of doing *ṣabr* or patience is very wide and general. Literally, it means to tie or to be firm. At this place, *ṣabr* means to stay firm on the implementation of Divine injunctions and to hold one's desiring self in check against the infringement of what Allah Ta'ālā has declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible). This covers one's obedience to all injunctions of the Sharī'ah which is pragmatic perfection at its best. The second reason lies in their certitude - they are certain of the Divine words. This includes the initial understanding of the sense of the verses as well as the resulting certitude which emerges from such comprehension - both. This is intellectual perfection at its best.

In short, in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, only those who are perfect both in *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'amal* (practice) are worthy of religious leadership. It is interesting here that perfection in practice has been made to precede perfection in knowledge while, usually *'ilm* (knowledge) precedes *'amal* (practice). This arrangement releases a strong hint, that is, a knowledge which has no corresponding practice with it is just not credible in the sight of Allah.

Ibn Kathīr has reported the following saying of some 'Ulamā' in his *tafsīr* of this verse:

بِالصَّبْرِ وَالْيَقِينِ تَنَالُ الْإِمَامَةَ فِي الدِّينِ

One can arrive at the station of leadership in religion only through *ṣabr* (patience) and *yaqīn* (certitude).

The word: جُرُزُ (*al-juruz*) in verse 27: أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زُرْعًا (Have they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby - 27) means barren land where trees do not grow.

### A wise system of irrigation

Usually the Qur'ān mentions the irrigating of dry lands and the

growing of crops therein by saying that the land receives rain, and becomes moist and growth-worthy. But, there is no mention of rain in this verse. Instead of that, it has been said that water itself is directed to move aground towards the dry land and thereby bring forth the growth of trees. In other words, the rain is made to fall on some other land and it is from there that water is directed to move in the form of carrier channels on the ground all the way to the dry land that receives no rain.

There is a hint embedded here. Some lands are so soft that they cannot withstand rains. If regular rains were made to fall there, buildings may collapse or trees may be uprooted. Therefore, nature has made its own arrangements for such lands. As for the rain itself, it is sent on a land which is capable of holding it. After that, water is made to flow from here all the way to such lands which cannot withstand rains - like the land of Egypt. And there are commentators who have pointed out to some lands of Yaman and Syria as being referred to in this verse. (as reported from Ibn 'Abbās and Al-Ḥasan)

And as for the correct position, this subject includes all such lands, with the inclusion of the land of Egypt known for scanty rains particularly. But, water from the rains in the Abyssinian territory of Africa comes into Egypt through the Nile bringing with it particles of the indigenous red soil which is good for the growth of crops. Therefore, the people of Egypt, despite that they have no rains in their country, do benefit by a supply of new water and soil every year. **فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ** (So, glorious is Allah, the Best of creators - 23:14).

Verse 28 carries a question posed by disbelievers: **وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ** (And they say, "When will this decision take place?") Here, they are referring to the victory of believers against disbelievers as promised by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are wondering about it since they see no traces of this likelihood anywhere around. Instead, they see Muslims as a group of people, scared, hiding,

To answer that, Allah Ta'ala said: **قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ** (Say, 'On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers,' - 29) This amounts to saying: Why are you asking us about the day of our victory while that day is going to be a day of trouble for you? When victory comes to us, you would have already been overtaken by

punishment. May be, right here in this world - as it happened in the battle of *Badr* - or, in the Hereafter. And when the punishment of Allah seizes someone, then, no profession of faith at that time, no declaration of *'Imān* at that stage is accepted. (as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr)

There are some others who have interpreted the 'day' in: متى هذا الفتحُ ("When will this decision take place?") as the day of Qiyāmah. The summarized explanation of this verse in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān appearing in the original edition of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is based on this *tafsīr*. ( The translation of *al-fath* as 'decision' as given in the text admits both probabilities)

*Alḥamdulillah*  
The Commentary on  
Sūrah As-Sajdah  
Ends here.

## Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb

Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb is Madani and has 73 verses and 9 sections.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

### Verses 1 - 3

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ  
عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١﴾ وَأَتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا  
تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٣﴾

O Prophet, fear Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [1] And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [2]

And place your trust in Allah, and Allah is enough as a guardian. [3]

### Commentary

This is a Madani Sūrah. Most of its subjects feature is the loveable persona of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his special place with Allah. There it has been variously emphasized that showing reverence for him is obligatory and that causing any pain to him is *ḥarām* (forbidden). Then the rest of the subjects taken up in the Sūrah also serve as complements to the ultimate perfection of his station.

### The background of revelation

Some narrations have been reported outlining the cause of the revelation of this Sūrah:

1. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to live in Madīnah after his

*hijrah*, the environs of the city were inhabited by Jewish tribes, some of whom being Quraizah, Naḍīr and Banū Qainuqā'. Being the prophet of mercy for all, he wished and tried that they somehow embrace Islam. It so happened that a few men from among these Jews started visiting him and posing as Muslims hypocritically. There was no faith in their heart. The Holy Prophet ﷺ took this as sufficient to begin with in the hope that the incidence of some people becoming Muslims would make it easier for him to invite others. Therefore, he used to welcome everyone from among these people particularly and warmly, so much so that even if they happened to do something bad, he would ignore it as a measure of religious expediency. It was because of this event that the initial verses of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb were revealed. (al-Qurṭubī)

According to another event reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it was after *hijrah* that Walīd Ibn Mughīrah and Shaibah Ibn Rabī'ah from among the *kuffār* of Makkah came to Madīnah. They made an offer before the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they would let him have half of the entire wealth of the Quraish of Makkah, if he were to withdraw his claim of prophethood. And the hypocrites and Jews of Madīnah gave him a threat that they would kill him, if he did not withdraw from his claim and call. Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The third event has been reported by Tha'ālibī and Wāḥidī with no ascription of authority. This event, according to them, goes back to the time when a no war pact was signed between the pagans of Makkah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Ḥudaibiyah. It was at that time that Abū Sufyān, 'Ikrimah, Ibn Abī Jahl and Abū al-A'war Sulamī came to Madīnah. There they said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'You stop speaking ill of our objects of worship - or simply say that they will also intercede on our behalf and bring benefits to us. If you do just that much, then we, on our part, will forget about you and your Lord - and the dispute will be all over.'

What they said was very unpleasant for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for all Muslims who wanted to kill them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'I have made a peace pact with them, therefore, this cannot be done.' Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Though, these reports are different but, in reality, there is no contradiction therein. These events could also be the cause of the revelation of the cited verses.



In these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to do two things: (1) اِتَّقِ اللَّهَ (ittaqillah), that is, 'fear Allah.' (2) لَا تُطِيعِ الْكَافِرِينَ (la tuti'ul-kafirin), that is, 'do not obey the disbelievers.' The order to fear Allah was given for the reason that killing them was a breach of trust which is ḥarām (forbidden). As for the order of not obeying the disbelievers, it was given for the reason that the demands made by the infidels in all these events were unacceptable. Relevant details follow.

### Explanation of Verses

In the opening verse of the Sūrah: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ (O Prophet, fear Allah - 1), the wording of the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is significant. This is a singular honor given and the high regard shown to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Nowhere in the entire Qur'ān, has he ever been addressed directly by his name - as has been the case in addressing other prophets. They have been addressed as يَا آدَمُ (O 'Ādam), يَا نُوحُ (O Nūḥ), يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (O Ibrāhīm), يَا مُوسَى (O Mūsā) and likewise, repeatedly. Contrary to this, wherever throughout the Qur'ān an address was made to the last among the prophets, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, he was addressed by some title, like *nabiyy* (prophet) or *rasūl* (messenger of Allah) etc. The only exception is that of four occasions [3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29] where the very purpose was to declare that he is the *rasūl* of Allah. It is there only that his blessed name has been mentioned - which was functionally necessary.

In this address, two orders were given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (1) That of fearing Allah in the sense that the peace pact entered into with the *Mushriks* of Makkah should not be contravened. (2) That of not yielding to what is said by the disbelievers, hypocrites and the Jews. At this point, a question may arise. Is it not that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is, after all, protected from all sins? Now, a breach of solemn pledge is obviously a major sin, and similarly, it is also a great sin to accept the offer of disbelievers and polytheists, quoted under the background of revelation. Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ was already protected from all kinds of sins, what was the need for such an order? According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, these orders have the sense of instruction to abide by this conduct in future as well - as he did in the event concerned. And the order of: اِتَّقِ اللَّهَ (ittaqillah: fear Allah) was made to come earlier for the reason that Muslims wanted to kill the *Mushriks* of Makkah with whom a treaty of peace was already

in effect. Therefore, the instruction to avoid a breach of pledge was made to precede through the expression: *إِتَى اللّٰهَ (ittaqaillah: fear Allah)*. As for the instruction of not yielding to the *kuffār* and *mushrikīn*, since no one had even wanted to do that, it was mentioned later.

And some respected commentators have said that, in this verse, though the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to warn the Muslim community at large. As for him, he was *ma'sūm*, that is, protected in the sense that there was just no probability of the contravention of Divine injunctions from him. But, the law is for the whole community. So, a corresponding mode was employed to make the community hear it and become alerted, and the address was made to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which enhanced the importance of the order significantly by suggesting: When, even the *rasūl* of Allah is the addressee of the order, how can any individual of the Muslim community remain exempted from it?

And Ibn Kathīr has said: In this verse, the real purpose of prohibiting the obedience of the disbelievers is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should not consult with them or let them have the opportunity of sitting with him frequently, because such consultation or mutual interaction generally becomes the cause of ending up in a disposition favouring the acceptance of what they proposed. Though, there was no probability that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would do what they asked him to do, still, he was stopped from maintaining such liaison with them and from having them participate in his consultations. It is this idea that has been expressed through the word: *إِطَاعَةً (iṭā'ah: obedience, submission or listening to and doing the bidding of someone)*, because such consultations and mutual interaction usually become the cause of ultimate acceptance. So, what has really been done here is that he has been prohibited from adopting the ways that could lead to such *iṭā'ah* or obedience. As for obedience itself, there was no probability that he would ever do that.

Now the second question that may arise here is that according to this verse, the disbelievers and the hypocrites were expected to propose things counter to the true Islamic position. To the extent of open disbelievers, such proposals coming from them were not improbable, and warning against yielding to them is understandable. But, if the hypocrites said anything counter to Islam, they would no longer remain hypocrites,

because in that case they would become open disbelievers. What, then, was the need to mention them separately? The answer is that it is possible that although the hypocrites may not have said anything against Islam very openly, but that they may have said something in support of other disbelievers.

And if the event featuring the hypocrites, described under the background of revelation, is taken to be the cause of revelation, it simply leaves no difficulty or vagueness behind - because, in terms of this event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has simply been prohibited from dealing with Jews calling themselves Muslims in a spirit of extra civility and accommodation.

Later, towards the end of this verse, by saying: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا** (Surely, Allah is All- Knowing, Wise - 1), stated there is the wisdom of the order given immediately earlier - that is, 'fear Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and hypocrites.' The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā, who knows the consequences of everything, is most wise, and fully aware of what is better for His servants. This was said to counter some of the things put forth by the disbelievers or hypocrites which could generate for them certain advantages of lesser tension and increased mutual tolerance. But, from this Allah Ta'ālā prohibited him by declaring that even this tolerance of such people was counter to what was expedient under the circumstances and that such a policy was not going to end well.

What is said in verse 2: **وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا** (And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.) is actually a complement of the first order. It means: Do not be beguiled or taken in by what the disbelievers and hypocrites say and do not agree or yield to it. Instead of all that, whatever you have been told by Allah through *wahy* (revelation) remains the only thing you and your companions should follow. Since, the noble companions ﷺ and Muslims at large are included under this address, therefore, by saying: **بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ** (what you do) in the plural form at the end, everyone was alerted.

Once again, the last statement: **وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا** (And place your trust in Allah and Allah is enough as a guardian- 3) is also a complement of the same order. Here it is being said: As for your approach, just pay no heed to what they say and, in order to succeed in your

objective, you should trust no one but Allah for He, in Himself and by Himself, is the ultimate doer, maker and fixer of all matters and things. With Him there, you do not need to acquiesce in the opinion of anyone.

### Ruling

The cited verse proves that, in religious matters, even consulting with disbelievers is not permissible. In other matters relating to technical or functional experience, there is no harm in doing so. And Allah knows best.

### Verses 4 - 5

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهِۦٓ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ الَّتِي تَطْهَرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤﴾  
 أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِۦٓ وَلٰكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾

Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (chest) cavity, nor did he make your wives whom you subjected to *zihar*, your mothers, nor did he make your adopted sons your (real) sons. That is (merely) a word uttered by your mouths. And Allah says the truth and He shows the (right) way. [4] Call them by (the name of) their (real) fathers; It is more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your friends. And there is no sin on you in the mistake you make, but in that which you do with intention of your heart and Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [5]

### Commentary

Previous verses carried instructions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ asking him not to act upon their advice and not to be cajoled into what they wanted to achieve. In the cited verses, there is a refutation of three customs prevailing among disbelievers as well as of their false notions.

(1) During *Jāhiliyyah*, Arabs used to say about a person who was smarter than others that he had two hearts in his chest cage.

(2) Then they had a custom about their wives following which a person would declare his wife to be like the back of his mother, or some other part of the body, and go on to say, 'you are, for me, like the back of my mother.' This, in their usage, was called "*Zihār*." It is a derivation from: *Zahr*, which means 'back'. They thought that if a person who had done "*Zihār*" with his wife, she becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) to him for ever.

(3) And then they had another custom under which one person would make the son of another his so-called or adopted son and who so would take a son in that manner, the boy would become known as 'his' son and would be addressed as such. According to their practice, this so-called or adopted son used to be recognized in all rules and regulations as a 'real' son. For instance, he would be regarded as a sharer even in inheritance, like a real offspring along with the children from his loins. Then, they would also regard the marriage relations of the so-called or adopted son as falling under the standard rule whereby the marriage with a category of certain women is unlawful. For example, as marriage with the wife of one's real son remains unlawful even after he has divorced her, they also took the divorced wife of the so-called or adopted son to be unlawful for that person.

Since the first of the three notions of the period of *Jāhiliyyah* were not tied up with religious belief or conduct, therefore, the Shari'ah of Islām had no need to refute it. To determine whether there is just the one heart inside the chest or, may be, there are two as well was simply a case of anatomical inquiry. That it was obviously false was known to everyone. Therefore, most likely, the matter of its refutation was also introduced as a prologue to the other two issues and it was said: The way false is the saying of the people of *Jāhiliyyah* - that 'someone could have two hearts in his chest', the falsity of which is known to everyone - similarly, false are their notions in the matters of *Zihār* (falsely declaring one's wife unlawful to him like his mother) and adoption of sons.

As for the injunctions governing the two issues of *Zihār* and adopted son, these are among the social and familial issues that have a great importance in Islām - to the extent that even their subsidiary details have

been given in the Qur'an by Allah Ta'ālā Himself. unlike other matters, this has not been left at the declaration of principles only with its detailed enunciation entrusted with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Regarding both these issues, the people of Jāhiliyyah, following their baseless whims, had a bunch of self-made laws relating to the lawful and the unlawful, the permissible and the impermissible. It was the duty of the True Religion that it should refute these false notions and make the truth manifest. Therefore, it was said: وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ الَّتِي تَنْظُرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ It means: 'You are wrong in thinking that, should someone call his wife the equal or like of his mother, the wife does not go on to become unlawful for him for ever like his real mother. Just because you say so, a wife does not become a mother, in reality. Your mother is but she who gave birth to you.' Now, at least, the notion of the people of Jāhiliyyah that *Zihār* makes one's wife unlawful for ever is refuted by this verse. What happens next? Does saying so bring about any legal effect? The standing injunction in this connection appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah [58:2-4] where saying so has been called a sin and abstention from it obligatory. And it is provided there that he who has made such a declaration should offer a *kaffārah* (expiation) of having done *zihār* after which having intercourse with his wife becomes lawful for him. The details of this issue will appear in the Commentary on Sūrah al-Mujādalah (Mā'ariful-Qur'an, Volume VIII).

The second issue was that of the *mutabanna*, i.e adopted son. About that, it was said: وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ (nor did he make your adopted sons your (real) sons - 4). The word: أَدْعِيَاءٌ (*ad'iyyā'*) is the plural of: دَعِيٌَّ (*da'iyy*) which means a so-called son. The sense is that the way no man has two hearts inside him and the way by likening one's wife to one's mother, the wife does not become the mother - similarly, the so-called son does not become your real son. In other words, neither will he be entitled to a share in inheritance with other sons, nor the precepts of the unlawfulness of marriage will apply to him. For example, the way the divorced wife of a real son is unlawful for his father for ever, the divorced wife of an adopted son is not unlawful for his so-called father. Since this last matter affects many other matters, therefore, it was complimented by another injunction, that is, even an adopted son should be attributed to his real father, and not to the person who has adopted him - because, this spells out the danger of misgiving and confusion creeping in many matters.

There is a *hadīth* from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others in which it has been said: 'Before the revelation of this verse, we used to call Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad (because the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken him in as his *mutabannā*, adopted son). After the revelation of this verse, we abandoned this practice.'

### Ruling

This tells us about many people who call the children of others as 'son' which, if because of simple affection, not because of declaring him an adopted son or a *mutabannā*, then, this would though be permissible, still, it is not the better choice, because it looks like violating the prohibition, at least in appearance. (As in Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī from al-Khāfajī Alā al-Baiḍāwī)

And this is the same matter which, by throwing the Quraish of Arabia into deception, led them to commit a sin of terribly serious proportions to the extent that they started blaming the Holy Prophet ﷺ by saying that he had married the divorced wife of his 'son', while in fact, he was not his son, but only a *mutabannā* (adopted son) - something that will be mentioned in this very Sūrah a little later.

### Verse 6

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو  
الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي  
الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٦﴾

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves and his wives are their mothers. And those having mutual kinship are closer to one another (for the purpose of inheritance) than (other) believers and emigrants according to the Book of Allah, unless you do some good to your friends (by making a will in their favour). This had been written in the Book (the Preserved Tablet). [6]

### Commentary

As stated earlier, most of the subjects in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb relate to the reverence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the unlawfulness of causing pain to him. After the mention of pains caused to him by disbelievers and hypocrites at the beginning of the Sūrah, some instructions were given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ following which three customs of the Jāhiliyyah were refuted. Out of these, the last custom related to such a pain inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ because the disbelievers had - at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها, the divorced wife of Sayyidnā Zayd رضي الله عنه, and on the basis of their pagan custom of *mutabanna* - blamed the Holy Prophet ﷺ of having married the divorced wife of his 'son.' Thus, from the beginning of the Sūrah up to this point, the subject concerned the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the present verse (6), it has been stated that the reverence of and the obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ more than the whole creation is *wājib* (necessary in the degree of obligation)

The meaning of the expression: "The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves" mentioned by Maulānā Thanavī is based on the saying of Ibn 'Aṭīyyah and others which has been opted for by al-Qurṭubī and most commentators. According to it, every Muslim is duty-bound to obey and implement the command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ more than the command of his parents. If one's parents oppose any command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their obedience in that matter is not permissible. Similarly, the implementation of his command takes precedence even over the pulls of one's own desiring self.

In a *hadīth* of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and others, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَأَنَا أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ إِقْرَأُوا إِنْ شِئْتُمْ النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى  
بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ

There is no such believer for whom I am not the closest of all people in this world and in the world to come. Read if you wish (this verse of the Qur'ān to confirm): ... (The Prophet is ...).

The sense of the statement is that his affection for every Muslim exceeds the affection of the whole world and, as such, the necessary



outcome has to be no other but that every believer holds him dearer than anyone else - which is something also said in another *ḥadīth*:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

None of you can become a believer until I become the dearest one to him, dearer than his father, and his son, and the whole world full of people/and the rest of the human beings, all of them. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim - Maḥzarī)

Said in the following sentence of the verse was: وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ (and his wives are your mothers). Here, the reference to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as mothers of the Muslim community means being mothers in terms of their respect and honor. Injunctions relating to the mother and her children, and those of the forbiddance of marriage, and of the absence of *ḥijāb* due to having the status of a *maḥram*, and of holding a share in the inheritance are injunctions which have nothing to do with it - as made explicit towards the end of the verse. As for the forbiddance of the marriage of the blessed wives with anyone in the Muslim community, this has been declared in a separate verse. Therefore, it is not necessary that even this forbiddance of marriage may be for the reason of being mothers.

### Ruling

The cited verse proves that the least breach of etiquette in the case of anyone of the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن is forbidden for two reasons: (1) That they are the mothers of the Muslim community and (2) also because any pain caused to them would cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - which is forbidden in a far too extreme a degree.

The literal sense of the expression: أولوا الأرحام (*ulu 'l-arḥām*) in the next sentence of the verse: وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ (And those having mutual kinship are closer to one another (for the purpose of inheritance) than (other) believers and emigrants) covers all relatives, whether they are those whom Muslim jurists call by the name of: عَصَبَات (*aṣbāt*: agnates) or those who are juxtaposed as أولوا الأرحام "*ulu 'l-arḥām*" against عَصَبَات "*aṣbāt*" in the light of a particular terminology. This terminology used by Muslim jurists, a later day product, is not what is meant here in the Holy Qur'ān.

Thus, it means that the relationship of the revered *rasūl* and his

blessed wives with the believers of the community is, though of a degree which precedes even that of a mother and father but, on the injunctions relating to the distribution of inheritance, this has simply no bearing. This inheritance, in fact, will be distributed only on the basis of lineal and closer relationships.

In the early stage of Islam, entitlement to shares in the inheritance was based on spiritual relationship. Later on, it was abrogated in favour of closeness of relationships which has been announced by the noble Qur'ān itself. This entire detail of the abrogating and the abrogated verses has appeared in Sūrah al-Anfāl (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume IV). And in that context, the mention of: وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ (and the emigrants) after: مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (and the believers) is there to highlight their distinction.

And some early commentators have said that, at this place, the Believers (*'al-mu'minīn'*) mean the Anṣār and the Emigrants (*Muhājirīn*) mean the Quraish. When placed in contrast with the *Muhājirīn*, it becomes clear that the word: *'al-mu'minīn'* (the believers) is for the Anṣār. In that case, this verse will be an abrogator of the rule of inheritance on the basis of the *Hijrah* (توارث بالهجرة) because, during the early stage of *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had, by establishing brotherly relations between the *Muhājirīn* and the *Ansar*, ordered that they will also inherit from each other. This verse abrogated that rule of 'inheritance by virtue of Hijrah' (Qurtubī)

Soon thereafter, it was stated: إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَآءِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا (unless you do some good to your friends (by making a will in their favour - 6). In other words, this means that inheritance as such will be received only on the basis of relationship - anyone unrelated will not be an inheritor - but, there may be people with whom you relate as your brothers in faith. If you wish to give them something, you have the right to do so. You could do so within your lifetime and give it to them as a gift, and it is also possible to make a will in their favour so that they get it after your death.

### Verses 7 - 8

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ  
وَعِيسَىٰ ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٧﴾ لَيْسَ سَأَلَ

الصّٰدِقِيْنَ عَن صِدْقِهِمْ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لِلْكَٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٨﴾

And (recall) when We took from the prophets their covenant, and from you and from Nuḥ and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Isā, the son of Maryam. And We did take from them a firm covenant, [7] so that He (Allah) may ask the truthful about their truth. And He has prepared a painful punishment for the disbelievers. [8]

### Commentary

At the beginning of the Sūrah, by saying: *وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to follow the Divine revelation sent to him. Then, in the previous verse: *الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ*, the believers have been obligated with the implementation of the orders of the recipient of the revelation. It is to further confirm and emphasize these very two things that, in the present two verses as well, the same two subjects have been reiterated, that is, the recipient of the revelation has been obligated to follow the revelation received by him from Allah and the non-recipient of the revelation has been obligated to follow the recipient of the revelation.

### The Covenant of the Prophets

The covenant taken from the blessed prophets, according to the cited verse, is in addition to the universal pledge taken from the entire creation as it appears in a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ reported by Imām Aḥmad:

خُصُّوا بِمِيثَاقِ الرِّسَالَةِ وَالنُّبُوَّةِ وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ، تَعَالَىٰ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ

"It was the prophets only from whom the covenant of messenger-ship and prophethood was taken, and this is the meaning of what Allah Ta'ālā has said:....(And when We took from the prophets their covenant...to the end of the verse).

This pledge from the prophets was the pledge of discharging the duties of prophethood and messenger-ship and of attesting to the veracity of each other and of being mutually helpful - as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and others have reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah رضي الله عنه. And according to one narration, it was also included in this pledge of the prophets that they should also proclaim that "Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā رضي الله عنه is the messenger of Allah, and the last of the prophets. After him, there will be no prophet [ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدَهُ ]

And this pledge from prophets was also taken in eternity (*Azal*) at the same time when the pledge of: *أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ* (*alastu bi-rabbikum*: Am I not your Lord?) was taken from the created at large. (*Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* and *Mazḥarī*)

After having generally mentioned prophets, peace be on them all, before saying: *وَمِنْكَ وَمَنْ نُوحٍ* (and from you and from Nūḥ... up to the end of the verse), five of them were particularly named on the basis of the unique distinction they have among the group of prophets. Then, even within those, it was by using the word: *مِنْكَ* (*minka*: from you) that the mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was made to precede that of others - although, his appearance in this world is later than all of them. The reason for this has been given in Ḥadīth itself:

كُنْتُ أَوَّلَ النَّاسِ فِي الْخَلْقِ وَآخِرَهُمْ فِي الْبَعْثِ (رواه ابن سعد وابو نعيم فى الحلية عن  
ميسرة الفجر والطبرانى فى الكبير عن ابن عباس - مظهرى)

'I am the first human being in the creation and the last of them in being sent (with the prophetic mission).' (Reported by Ibn Sa'd and Abū Nu'aim in *Al-Ḥilyah* from *Maisirah al-Mafjar* and *At-Tabarānī* in *al-Kabīr* from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ - *Mazḥarī*)

### Verses 9 - 27

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ  
فَارْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ط وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ  
بَصِيرًا ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ جَاءَ وَكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ  
الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا ﴿١٠﴾  
هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذْ يَقُولُ  
الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، إِلَّا  
غُرُورًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ  
فَارْجِعُوا ۖ وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۖ وَمَا  
هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۚ إِنَّ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ

أَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سَأَلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاتُوهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوا بِهَا إِلَّا يَسِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ  
 كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُؤَلُّونَ الْأَدْبَارَ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ  
 مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْفِرَارُ إِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ  
 وَإِذَا لَا تُمْتَعُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٦﴾ قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
 إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ۗ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ  
 اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُعَوِّقِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ  
 لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا ۚ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾ أَشِحَّةً  
 عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ  
 كَالَّذِي يُغْشَى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوكُمْ  
 بِالْسِنَةِ ۖ جِدَادٍ أَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ۗ أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ  
 أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾ يَحْسَبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ  
 لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا ۚ وَإِنْ يَأْتِ الْأَحْزَابَ يَوَدُّوا لَوَانَهُمْ بَادُونَ فِي الْأَعْرَابِ  
 يَسْئَلُونَ عَنْ أَنْبَاءِكُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كَانُوا فِيكُمْ مَا قُتِلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢٠﴾ لَقَدْ  
 كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ  
 الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَاقَالُوا  
 هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا  
 إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ  
 عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ، وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا  
 ﴿٢٣﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنْفِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ  
 أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ  
 كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا ۖ وَكَفَىٰ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ ۗ

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيزًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَأَنْزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ  
 الْكِتَابِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ  
 وَتَأْسِرُونَ فَرِيقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا  
 لَمْ تَطْعُوهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

O those who believe,<sup>(1)</sup> remember Allah's favour to you, when the forces (of the infidels) came upon you, and We sent upon them a wind, and the forces (of angels) you did not see. And Allah is watchful of what you do. [9]

(Recall) when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes were distracted and the hearts reached the throats, and you were thinking about Allah all sorts of thoughts. [10] At that occasion, the believers were put to a trial and were shaken with a violent convulsion. [11] And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully; [12] and when a group of them said, "O people of Yathrib (Madīnah), there is no place for you to stay; so go back." And a group of them was seeking permission (to leave) from the prophet, saying, "In fact our homes are vulnerable," while they were not vulnerable; they wanted nothing but to escape. [13] And if it (Madīnah) is entered (by the enemy, in their presence,) from all its sides and they are asked (to join) the mischief, they would readily commit it, and would not remain in them (their homes) but for a short while<sup>(2)</sup> [14] despite that they had already made a covenant with Allah that they would not turn their backs; and a covenant with Allah has to be answered for. [15]<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) These verses refer to the battle of Aḥzāb, also known as 'the battle of Khandaq' in which different tribes of Arabia, led by the Quraish invaded upon Madīnah, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ defended the city by digging a trench.

(2). It means that although they are escaping from the battle - field on the pretext that their homes are not safe, yet if the forces of the enemy invite them to join the battle against Muslims, after their having entered the city from all sides, they would easily join them in their mischief against Muslims, and would no more remain in their homes. It shows that their pretext is sham.

(3). That is, everyone who enters into a covenant with Allah, has to answer how he has fulfilled it.

Say, "Flight will never be of any use to you, if you flee from death or killing, and even then you will not be let to enjoy (life) but for a little while." [16] Say, "Who is there to protect you from Allah, if He intends evil to you, or (who is there to prevent Him) if He intends mercy for you?" And beside Allah, they will not find for themselves either a friend or a helper. [17]

Allah does know the ones from among you who prevent (others from joining the battle) and those who say to their brothers, "Come along with us," and who do not come to the battle but for a little while, [18] (and that too) with a greed against you (i.e. to extract a share of spoils from you). But when fear comes, you will see them looking towards you, rolling their eyes, like the one who gets faint because of death. Then once fear is gone, they assail you with sharp tongues, in greed for the good (i.e. the wealth acquired as spoils).<sup>(4)</sup> These people did not accept faith (in real terms), therefore Allah has nullified their acts.<sup>(5)</sup> And all this is so easy for Allah. [19] They think that the coalition forces have not(yet) gone. And should the coalition forces come (again), they would like to be living in countryside among the Bedouins, asking (others) about your news. And even if they were to remain among you, they would not fight, but a little. [20]

There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah - for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah profusely. [21]<sup>(6)</sup>

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- (4). This verse has unveiled cowardice of the hypocrites on the one hand, and their greed for wealth on the other. The sense is that they are so coward that when an attack from the enemy is apprehended, they are frightened like a person who becomes faint in fear of death. But when the enemy is driven away by the Muslims, and the spoils of war are distributed, they come forward assailing the Muslims with their sharp tongues and claiming that the victory is achieved with their help, and therefore they deserve a share in the spoils.
- (5). It means that virtuous acts deserve reward in the Hereafter only when they are accompanied by true faith in Allah, and since it has become evident that these hypocrites do not have true faith, even their virtuous acts will not be of any use to them in the Hereafter and will remain null and void.
- (6). In the context of the battle of Aḥzab, this verse is initially meant to remind the hypocrites that they should have followed the example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who stood firm in the battle, but according to the unique style of the Holy Qur'ān, the direction is given in generic terms to lay down a universal rule that the Muslims should follow the examples set by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in all matters of life.

And when the believers saw the coalition forces, they said, "This is what Allah and His messenger had promised us, and Allah and His messenger had told the truth." And it only increased them in faith and submission. [22]

Among the believers, there are men who came true to the covenant they had with Allah. So, some of them have fulfilled their vows (by sacrificing their lives in the way of Allah), and some of them are (still) waiting, and they did not change (their commitment) in the least. [23] <sup>(7)</sup> (All this happened) so that Allah may give reward to the truthful for their truthfulness, and punish the hypocrites, if He so wills, or accept their repentance. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [24]

And Allah has turned back the disbelievers with all their rage, having achieved no good. And Allah sufficed the believers against fighting. <sup>(8)</sup> And Allah is Powerful, Mighty. [25] And He has brought those of the people of the Book who had backed them, down from their fortresses, and cast awe into their hearts, so as to make you kill some of them and take others as captives. [26] And He let you inherit their land and their homes and their wealth, and a land you have not trodden (so far). And Allah is Powerful to do any thing. [27] <sup>(9)</sup>

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- (7). This verse admires those companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who had not participated in the battle of Badr due to some valid excuses, and had vowed that whenever the next battle would come to happen, they would offer their lives in defence of faith. Then, some of them, like Sayyidnā 'Anas Ibn Naḍr ؓ and Muṣ'ab Ibn 'Umair ؓ fulfilled their vows by sacrificing their lives in the battle of 'Uḥūd, while some others, like Sayyidnā 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah ؓ remained alive, but eagerly waiting for having the honor of being martyred in the way of Allah.
- (8). It means that Allah made a divine arrangement by sending a violent wind to the coalition forces which compelled them to go back, and thus the Muslims did not have to indulge in a regular battle, except to the extent of some individual encounters.
- (9). These two verses refer to Banū qurayzah, the Jewish tribe who had entered into a treaty with the Muslims not to fight against them, and not to support the enemies of the Muslims. But at the time of The battle of Aḥzāb, they violated the terms of the treaty and supported the coalition forces. Even earlier, they had been constantly conspiring against the Muslims to an intolerable extent. After the battle of Aḥzāb was over, the Holy Prophet ﷺ besieged the fortress of Banū qurayzah, and finally, they had to surrender, and most of their men were killed, and the women and children were made captives. This event has been referred to in these verses. At the same time, Allah Ta'ālā has given a good news to the Muslims that they would conquer some other lands which they had not entered before. The words, "and a land you have not trodden" refer to such future victories, especially to the conquest of Khyber that followed within a few years after the battle of Aḥzāb.



### Commentary

Identified in the previous verses was the great station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with the instruction to Muslims that they should follow and obey him totally and perfectly. Congruent to this, these two full sections of the Qur'ān have been revealed about the event of the battle of al-Aḥzāb. Mentioned therein is the simultaneous attack of the combined forces of many groups of disbelievers and polytheists, their threatening encirclement, the subsequent blessings bestowed on Muslims by Allah Ta'ālā and the several miracles that issued forth at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, very much as a corollary to this, there are many instructions and injunctions relating to different departments of life. It is because of these very priceless instructions that great commentators have written about the details of the event of Aḥzāb with considered details at this place, particularly al-Qurṭubī, Maḥzarī and others. Therefore, some details of the event of Aḥzāb along with the instructions are being written here. Most of it has been taken from al-Qurṭubī and Maḥzarī. That which has been taken from some other book carries the necessary reference.

### THE EVENT OF THE BATTLE OF AL-AḤZAB

The word: الأَحْزَابُ (*al-aḥzab*) is the plural form of: حِزْبٌ (*ḥizb*) which means party or group. In this battle, the combined forces of different groups of disbelievers had, under a pact to eliminate Muslims, mounted an attack on Madīnah. Therefore, this battle has been named as the battle of al-Aḥzāb. And since, in this battle, a trench was also dug under the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ across the line of enemy attack, therefore, this battle is also called the battle of the Trench (Khandaq). The battle of Banū Quraizah too - which took place immediately after the battle of al-Aḥzāb and finds mention in the cited verses as well - that too, was actually a part of the battle of al-Aḥzāb, as it would appear through the details of this event.

In the year only next to the year the Holy Prophet ﷺ graced Madīnah after migrating from Makkah al-Mukarramah, the event of the battle of Badr came to pass. In the third year, came the battle of Uḥud. In the fourth year, it was this battle of al-Aḥzāb. Some narrations say that this event came to pass in the fifth year. Nevertheless, the attacks of the

disbelievers against Muslims had been continuing since the *hijrah* up to this time without any break. The attack on the occasion of the battle of al-Aḥzāb was made with full power, determination and mutual pledge. Therefore, this battle was the severest on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Ṣaḥābah as compared with other battles - because, the count of the attacking confederate forces of the disbelievers has been given as twelve to fifteen thousand. On the other side, there were Muslims, three thousand in all, and those too very ill-equipped. Then, the time was hard winter. The Qur'an describes the horrible severity of this event by saying things like: *زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ* (the eyes were distracted - 33:10), *بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ* (and hearts reached the throats - 33:10) and *وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا* (they were shaken with a violent convulsion - 33:11).

But, the way this time was the hardest on Muslims, they were also compensated at its best by Allah Ta'ālā. It was with His help and support that the matter ended in favour of Muslims in the form of such a great success and victory that broke the back of all hostile groups of Mushriks, Jews and Hypocrites leaving them just about incapable of even thinking of some attack against Muslims in the future. From that angle, this battle was the last armed confrontation between *kufr* and Islam - fought on the plains of al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah in the fourth or fifth year of *hijrah*.

The event began when about twenty men from the Jewish tribe of Banū Naḍīr and the tribe of Abū Wā'il who were morbidly hostile to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Muslims at large reached Makkah al-Mukarramah. They met with Quraish chiefs and roused them to start a war against Muslims. The Quraish chiefs were under the impression that the way Muslims took their idol-worship to be *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and for which reason they regarded their religion as ill-founded, the Jews too would be no different and their thinking would be similar to it. If so, how could they hope for a common ground of unity from them? Therefore, these chiefs asked the Jews, "You people know that there is difference of religion and creed between us and Muḥammad ﷺ. And you are the people of the Book and the people of learning. First of all, you tell us as to which religion is better in your sight, ours or theirs?"

### **A lie is no novelty in the arena of politics!**

The reply given by these Jews was totally contrary to their knowledge

and conscience. To them, they said, "Your religion is better than the religion of Muḥammad." Thereupon, the infidels of Makkah were somewhat satisfied. Still, the matter was taken to a future demonstration of intent. It was decided that these twenty visitors joined by fifty men from among the Quraish chiefs would go to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, cling to the walls of the Baytullah by their chests and make a solemn pledge before Allah that they would continue fighting against Muḥammad ﷺ to their last man.

### **A marvel of the forbearance and magnanimity of Allah Ta'ālā!**

Here are the enemies of Allah in the House of Allah clinging to the walls of the Ka'abah of Allah making a compact to fight a war against His Rasūl - and then return satisfied with a new passion for war! This is unique manifestation of the forbearance and magnanimity of Allāh Ta'ālā. Then, the ultimate end of this compact is not too far to find. It will appear towards the end of the narrative in that all of them bolted from this battle.

These Jews, after having made a pact with the Quraish of Makkah, reached the tribe of Ghitfān, a great warring tribe of Arabia. They told them that they and the Quraish of Makkah were in full agreement with the plan to eliminate the spreaders of this new religion (Islam) once for all with their combined power. They asked them too to join hands with them in that pact. Then, they also offered them a bribe. They promised to give them the total produce of dates in one year in Khaibar - according to some narrations, they promised the half of it to the tribe of Ghitfān. 'Uyaiyah Ibn Ḥiṣn, the chief of the tribe of Ghitfān, approved of his participation in the pact under this condition. Thus, they too became a part of the war effort.

Then, in accordance with the mutual pact, the Quraish armed force of four thousand men, three hundred horses and war supplies laden on one thousand camels came out of Makkah under the command of Abū Sufyān and stopped at Marr az-Zahrān. Here, all tribes of Aslam, Ashja', Banū Murrah, Banū Kinānah, Fazārah and Ghitfān joined them. Their total number has been reported in some narrations as ten thousand, as twelve thousand in some others and as fifteen thousand in still other.

### **The most lethal attack on Madīnah**

The armed force that fought against Muslims in the battle of Badr

was that of one thousand men. Then, the army that attacked in the battle of Uḥud had three thousand men. This time, the numerical strength of the attacking forces was greater than it was any time before that - the equipment and the combined power of the Arab and Jewish tribes were also to be counted as additional factors.

### Three ingredients of Muslim war effort

When the information about this aggressive united front reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the very first verbal reaction came out from him in the words:

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best One to trust in - 3:173.

After that, he assembled opinion leaders from among the Emigrants and Helpers together and went into consultation with them. Although, the blessed recipient of *Wahy* (revelation) really needs no consultation for he acts directly with the permission of Allah Ta'ālā. But, there were two advantages in having such consultation: (1) To initiate and establish the Sunnah (practice) of consultation in the Muslim community and (2) to revive mutual liaison and unity in the hearts of the believers and to persuade them to the need of helping and supporting each other. After that, they talked about matters of defence and the physical resources needed in fighting a war. Present among the group of consultants there was Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisīؓ who had recently freed himself from the artificially imposed slavery of a Jew and had devoted himself to the service of Islam. He advised that in his country, the Persian kings have used trenches they arranged to be dug across the enemy line of attack. This had always helped stop the enemy. Accepting his advice, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered that trenches be dug - and he himself participated with others doing that.

### The digging of trenches

It was decided to dig this trench on the entire passage way behind the mount of Sal' which could be used by the enemy to come into Madīnah from the north. The ground marking of the length and width of this trench was personally drawn by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Beginning from Shaikhayn, this trench came as far as the western corner of the mount of Sal' and later it was extended to the intersection of the valleys of Buṭḥān

and Rātāunā. The total length of this trench was approximately three and a half miles. The precise measurement of the width and depth could not be ascertained from any narration. But, it is obvious that the width and depth would have also been special, of the kind the enemy would have not found easy to cross.

It has appeared in the narration of the event relating to Sayyidnā Salmān رضي الله عنه digging the trench that he used to dig his allotted portion of the trench which, at the end of the day, came to be five yards long and five yards deep (Maḥzarī). From this, it can be said that the depth of the trench was five yards.

### **The size of the Islamic 'army'**

At that time, Muslims were a total of three thousand in number along with a total of thirty six horses.

### **Participant age of maturity was set at fifteen years**

Some non-pubert children had also come out with the Islamic 'army' with the desire to defend their faith. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked children below the age of fifteen years to leave. Those fifteen year old were accepted - included therein were Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Zayd Ibn Thābit, Abu Sa'īd al-Khudrī and Barā' Ibn 'Āzib رضي الله عنهم اجمعين. When this Islamic force was ready to march for battle, the hypocrites who normally kept a face and remained intermingled among Muslims, started backing out. Some bolted away incognito. Others came up with false excuses and tried to get the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to go back. This was a new trouble that rose from within. Some of the cited verses have been revealed about these very hypocrites. (Qurṭubī)

### **Islamic nationality and Islamic unity do not contradict administrative and social division**

For this Jihād, the Holy Prophet ﷺ appointed Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah رضي الله عنه as the standard bearer of the *Muhājirīn* and Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn 'Ubādah رضي الله عنه as the standard bearer of the *Anṣār*. At that time, the mutual brotherhood among the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār* stood established on very firm foundations. All of them were brothers to each other. But, it was in view of administrative convenience that the leadership of the *Muhājirīn* was separated from the leadership of the *Anṣār*. From this, we learn that Islamic nationality and Islamic unity are

not contradictory to administrative and social division. In fact, by placing the burden of responsibility on each group helped strengthen the bond of mutual confidence and cooperation. And in the very first assignment, that is, in the digging of trenches before this battle, this mutual cooperation became all too evident as described below:

### **The job of digging the trenches was spread over the whole army**

The Holy Prophet ﷺ divided the whole army of the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār* in groups of ten men each and made every group of ten men responsible for digging forty yards of the trench. Since Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī was the one who had advised the digging of the trench, knew the job, was strong and was neither one of the *Anṣār* nor one of the *Muhājirīn*, it created a sort of competition among the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirīn* for each of the two wanted to have him with them. The matter reached to the extent that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to intervene in order to avoid any dispute. He gave his verdict by saying: *سَلْمَانُ مِنَّا أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ* (Salmān is part of our family).

### **The discrimination of local and foreign in functional expertise**

The universal wont in our time is that people do not like to treat those non-resident and non-local at par with them. But, this was a place where every group felt proud of having the competent one on their side and with them. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ included him in his family on his own and thus put an end to the dispute. Then, he practically picked up some *Muhājirīn* and some *Anṣār* to form a group of ten which included Sayyidnā ‘Amr Ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah and others who were from among the *Muhājirīn*.

### **A great miracle**

By chance, in the section of the trench entrusted with Sayyidnā Salmān and others with him, a huge, hard and glossy rock showed up. Sayyidnā Salmān's colleague, Sayyidnā ‘Amr Ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه says, "This rock broke our implements and we failed to cut it apart. Then I suggested to Salmān that though it is possible to dig the trench by-passing the huge rock and join it up with the main trench with a minor crookedness in it, but we should not deviate from the line drawn by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as based on our opinion. So, you go, tell the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the position here and get an order from him about what we should do now."

### Divine reminders

It is strange that in this three and a half mile stretch of land no one from among the diggers of the trench faced any impediment which would render him helpless. The only one who did face it was Sayyidnā Salmān ؓ who had given the advice of digging a trench and the whole project had started on his advice. To him Allah Ta'ālā showed that there was no way out even after digging and making a perfect trench - except turning to Allah Ta'ālā for help in the face of the failure of all implements and instruments. Here, these blessed souls were being taught that assembling material means to the measure of capacity and ability was obligatory, but to place trust in these was not correct. The trust of a believer - even after having assembled all possible material means - should be in Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Sayyidnā Salmān ؓ presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and told him about what had happened. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was himself working in his part of the trench. He was busy hauling the dug out earth from the trench. Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ؓ says, "I saw him. Dust had covered his blessed body in a manner that the skin on his front and back was not visible." Rather than give Sayyidnā Salmān any advice or order, he accompanied him in person to the problem spot. With the ten Ṣaḥābah busy digging the trench with Sayyidnā Salmān, he too went down into the trench and joined the diggers. He took the pickaxe in his blessed hands, struck at the rock and recited the verse: *تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا* (*tammāt kalimatu rabbika sidqa*: And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth... - al-An'ām, 6:115). With this one single stroke from it, one third portion of the rock was cut off and released from this rock was a streak of light. After that, he struck at the rock once again and recited the said verse upto the end, that is: *تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا* (*tammāt kalimatu rabbika sidqan wa 'adla* : And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice - al-An'ām, 6:115). Cut off with this second stroke was an additional one third portion of the rock which released a streak of light as before. The third time, he recited the same verse in full and executed the third stroke. With it, the rock was all finished. The Holy Prophet ﷺ came out of the trench, picked up the sheet wrap he had left at the edge of the trench and sat down on one side of it. At that time, Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī ؓ said, "Yā Rasulallah, every time struck at the rock,

ever time I saw a light coming out of the rock." The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Salmān, "Have you really seen this light?" He said, "Yā Rasūlallāh, I have seen it with my own eyes."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "In the light that was released after the first strike, I saw the palaces of the cities of Yaman and those of Cyrus and Angel Jibra'īl told me: 'your *Ummah* will conquer these cities.' And when I struck at the rock the second time, I was shown the red palaces of the Byzantines and Angel Jibra'īl gave the good news, 'your *Ummah* will conquer these cities as well.' " After having heard this, all Muslims felt at peace and became assured of their great successes in the future.

### **Hypocrites throw taunts at Muslims for believing in their Prophet's promises**

At that time, the hypocrites who were part of the digging operations of the trench, started asking other Muslims, 'It is strange that you people are not surprised at what Muḥammad ﷺ is telling you. Is it not that he is making all those baseless promises to you in the depth of this trench being dug in Yathrib where he is claiming to be seeing the palaces of Ḥīrah (in the South) and Madā'in ( in the North)? And on top of it all, he is telling you that it is you people who are going to conquer them! Just look at yourself. Here you are, digging and digging, forgetful of all your needs. Frankly, you do not even have the time to take care of your human compulsions. Still, is it you who are going to conquer the countries of Cyrus and others?' Thereupon, it was about this very event that, in the twelfth verse cited above, it was revealed:

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، إِلَّا غُرُورًا

(And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully; - 12). Here, in this verse, by saying: *الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ* (and those having malady in their hearts), reference is being made to the state of the same hypocrites hidden in whose hearts there was that disease of hypocrisy.

Just imagine the kind of time it was, a severe trial indeed. At stake was the very faith of Muslims for they had to believe in the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the full backing of their mind and heart despite being threatened by disbelievers from all sides. They had no servants to



dig their trench for them. They were doing this hard work with their own hands braving the lashing winter. The unfriendly weather, the approaching enemy factor, theirs was a general climate of fear all around. In a situation like that, it was not easy to be sure of even one's defence and survival within whatever means were available. How could they go on from here and start believing in the good news of the conquests of the great kingdoms of Byzantine and Persia? But, the value of *ʿīmān* (faith) is the highest of all deeds for the reason that they, even when facing totally contrary causes and conditions, did not have the least doubt or qualm of conscience about what the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told them.

### Seniors must share every trial with their juniors - Great guidance for Muslims

Who does not know that the Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were such selfless servants of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they never wanted to have him do the hard labor of digging the trench with them, but it was the personal initiative of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he chose to share this hard labor with his noble companions to mollify their hearts and teach them their essential lesson to put mutual brotherhood to practice. Of course, the noble companions staked their lives for the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the basis of his most perfect attributes as prophet and messenger of Allah, but of the many outward causes for this attachment, there was this major cause that he would be with them on all occasions facing all sorts of trials and pains like everybody else. When he did that, nobody ever thought of what we know as a class difference. There was no ruler and there was no one being ruled. There was no king around and there was no subject paying homage. Who was the man in power and who was the man from the masses? This kind of difference was unimaginable at that time. Unfortunately, from the time the Muslim wielders of power abandoned this Sunnah (the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ,) that was the time these differences gushed forth bringing all sorts of tests and trials in their wake.

### The master prescription of achieving success against something hard to accomplish

In the event mentioned above, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has recited the verse of the Qurʾān: *تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ* (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His

Words - al-An‘ām, 6:115) while striking at this invincible rock. This tells us that the recitation of this verse is a tested prescription for the resolution of something difficult.

### **The selfless mutual cooperation of the noble Ṣaḥābah**

We already know that there were ten men appointed for the digging of the trench at every ten yards. But, it is obvious that some people are stronger and can finish their job sooner than others. The same was true here. The noble Ṣaḥābah who finished their allotted portion of digging would never go on to sit doing nothing and thinking that their duty was over. In fact, they would help out other Ṣaḥābah whose portion of digging was still incomplete. (Qurṭubī, Maḥzarī)

### **Three and a half mile long trench was completed in six days**

The outcome of the hard work put in by the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all, was before everybody in six days in that such a long, wide and deep trench stood all completed within that short period of time. (Maḥzarī)

### **An open miracle in the feast hosted by Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ**

It was during the digging of this very trench that the well known event came to pass. On one of those days, when Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ looked at the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he felt deep down in his heart that he was really affected by hunger. He went to his wife and told her, "If you have something with you, cook it. I simply cannot bear by seeing this effect of hunger on his blessed person." His wife said, "We have about a ṣā‘ of barley grains in our home. I am going to grind them and make some flour." One ṣā‘ is equal to about three and a half kilograms in terms of our weights. So, his wife got busy with the grinding of barley, making flour, preparing dough and baking bread. There was a goat kid in the house. Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ slaughtered it, cooked the meat and was ready to go out and invite the Holy Prophet ﷺ in when his wife called out to him saying, "Look, there is a crowd of the Ṣaḥābah with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Do something and somehow invite only the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. Please, do not put me to disgrace by causing such a big crowd of the noble Ṣaḥābah come in with the Holy Prophet ﷺ." Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ, acting realistically, made the actual situation fully clear before the Holy Prophet ﷺ telling him that they had only that much of food in the house. But, as for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he made a public announcement before the

entire work force asking everyone to come to the feast at Sayyidnā Jābir's home. Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ was struck with wonder. When he reached home, his wife was extremely disturbed. She asked, "Did you tell the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the actual situation at home and the amount of food available?" Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ said, "Yes, that I have told him." This put his wife at peace and she said, "Then we have nothing to worry about. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is our master. Let him have it the way he wishes."

Any more detail of the event is unnecessary at this place. It is enough to know the outcome that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took it upon himself to distribute the bread and curry to everybody with his own blessed hands and see that they are entertained and fed satisfactorily. As a result, the whole crowd ate to their fill. And Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ says that "even after everybody having finished eating, our stock pot showed no dearth of meat, nor our kneaded flour any signs of decrease. All of us in the family ate to our heart's content and whatever remained we sent to the neighbours."

Thus, when the digging of the trench was finished within six days, the Confederate army arrived and the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, went into battle formation with the Mount of Sal' thoughtfully kept towards their rear.

### **The Jews of the tribe of Banī Quraizah break their pledge and join the Confederate aggressors**

That was a time when a group of three thousand ill-equipped people standing up to fight against an equipped army of some ten to twelve thousand men was something far too wild to believe. On top of all that, there came up a new factor. Out of the Confederate forces, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab, the chief of the tribe of Banū Naḍir who had contributed most in rallying everyone against the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Muslim followers, took another step. He reached Madīnah and conspired to win over the Jewish tribe of Banū Quraizah over their side. The situation was that Banū Quraizah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ already had a peace treaty signed between them. This was a solemn undertaking and the two parties naturally had no apprehensions from each other. Ka'b Ibn Asad was the chief of the tribe of Banū Quraizah. Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab went to see him. When Ka'b heard about his reported arrival, he had the gate of his castle closed, so that this man would not reach him. But, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab

hanged out there, he called and called and insisted that the gate be opened. Ka'b told him from inside the gate, "We have already made a peace treaty with Muḥammad ﷺ and we know of nothing from his side other than truth, honesty and strict adherence to the treaty right to this day, therefore, we are bound with this treaty and cannot join hands with you." For long, this dialogue between the two continued with Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab insisting that the gate be opened and that Ka'b should talk to him and the later kept refusing to do that while staying inside the closed gate. But, consequently when Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab challenged Ka'b's sense of shame in that he was treating a visitor in such a crude manner, the gate was opened. Once called in, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akḥṭab painted such a rosy picture of his proposals that Ka'b ultimately fell into the trap laid out by him and gave his word that he would take part in the Confederate expedition. When Ka'b related what he had done before other chiefs of his tribe, they all said in one voice, "You did something terrible. You broke your pledge with Muslims for no reason whatsoever and that by going along with the other side you have exposed your own self to danger." Ka'b too was affected by their comments and even repented for what he had done. But, things had gone out of his control by that time and this very pledge-breaking finally went on to become the cause of the destruction of Banū Quraizah as it would be mentioned later.

At that particular time, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Ṣaḥābah got this information, they were shocked by this breach of trust from Banū Quraizah. What worried them most was the strange situation created for them. They had a trench dug across the line of the marching forces of the Confederates who were coming from outside Madīnah. But, these Banū Quraizah people were right there inside Madīnah. How were they going to defend against them? About this when the Qur'ān says that the disbelieving forces of the Confederate army had overtaken you: مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ (from above you and from below you -10), Tafsīr authorities say that the expression: فَوْق (from above) means the Banū Quraizah and those who came from below them (أَسْفَلَ) mean the rest of the Confederates.

To find out the reality of this breach of trust and to assess the correct situation in the whole matter, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent a deputation comprising Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh رضي الله عنه, the chief of the Anṣār tribe of

Aws and Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, the chief of the tribe of Khazraj, to Ka'b in order to talk to him about the matter. The instruction given to them was that should the event of this breach of trust turn out to be incorrect, they were to tell the whole truth before all the Ṣaḥābah openly. And should it turn out to be true, they should, on their return, say something ambivalent which will be a message only we shall understand while the rest of the Ṣaḥābah will remain safe from facing any panic because of it.

When both these elders named Sa'd reached there, they saw open proofs of the breach of pledge all over which even went to the extent of hot exchanges of words between them and Ka'b. On their return, following the instructions given to them earlier, they reported back their findings in unclear words and thus informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the event of the breaking of the pledge was true.

At the time when the Jewish tribe of Banū Quraizah, once an ally of Muslims, also joined the war against them, something else started happening. The hypocrisy of people who posed to be a part of the Muslim community lost its cover. Some of them became far too vocal and started saying things against the Holy Prophet ﷺ as was mentioned earlier in: *وَأَذَى يَقُولُ الْمَنَّافُونَ* (and when said the hypocrites - 12). Then, they were others who cooked up all sorts of excuses to run away from the battlefield and sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to do that - which has been mentioned in verse 13: *إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ* (Our homes are vulnerable).

Now according to the present state of the battle front, the Confederate forces could not march in because of the trench with the Muslim army positioned on the other side. There was almost a continuous exchange of arrows between them all the time. This state of affairs dragged on for nearly a month. They could neither confront each other in some open or decisive battle, nor could they turn heedless towards the opponent for any extended period of time. Day and night, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah would stand guard by the trench. Although, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was personally involved in this hard task like everybody else, yet the thought that all his companions were suffering from extreme anxiety due to this impasse was very painful for him.

### **A strategic plan of the Holy Prophet ﷺ**

It was already in the knowledge of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the chief