

Sūrah Al-Hujurāt

(The Apartments)

Sūrah Al-Hujurāt was revealed in Madīnah. It has 18 Verses and 2 Sections.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Verses 1 - 5

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدِيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيهِمْ ﴿١﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ
صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرٍ بَعْضُكُمْ لِيَعْضِلَ
تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغْضُبُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ
مَغْفِرَةٌ وَآجُرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادِونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ
أَكْثُرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ
خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

O those who believe, do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [1] O those who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and be not loud when speaking to him, as you are loud when speaking to one another, lest your good deeds become void while you are not aware. [2] Surely, those who lower their voices before Allah's Messenger are the

ones whose hearts Allah has tested for piety; for them there is forgiveness, and a great reward. [3] As for those who call you from behind the apartments, most of them lack understanding. [4] Had they remained patient until you come out to them, it would have been much better for them. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [5]

Background of Revelation

According to Qurṭubī, there are six narratives cited as the background of revelation of these verses. Qādī Abū Bakr Ibn ‘Arabī confirms that all the narratives are correct, because they all are included in the general meaning of the verses. One of the narratives, reported by Bukhārī, is that once some people from the tribe of Tamim came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. During their stay, one of the issues under discussion was to appoint someone as a ruler of this tribe. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ suggested the name of Qa‘qā’ Ibn Ma‘bad, while Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ proposed the name of Aqra’ Ibn Habis. Both of them discussed the issue for a while during which the voices of both became loud. These verses were revealed in this background.

(لَا تُقْبِلُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...) ...do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger - 49:1) The phrase بَيْنَ الْيَدَيْنِ, literally, means "between the two hands", but in Arabic usage it means 'in front of' or 'ahead of'. It means: do not go ahead of or in front of Allah's Messenger. The Qur'an does not say in what matter they are prohibited from preceding him. It would appear that the general prohibition includes preceding by word or deed. Wait for the Messenger's reply unless he himself appoints someone to reply. Likewise if he is walking, no one should overtake him. If they are sitting in a dining session, no one should start eating before him. If there is a clear indication or strong evidence that he himself wants to send someone forward, this would be possible, for example some people used to be asked to go on a journey or war ahead of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Respect for Islamic Scholars and Religious Leaders

Some of the scholars have ruled that Muslims should observe the same rule in respect of Islamic scholars and spiritual masters as enjoined by the Qur'an, because they are the heirs of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ. One day the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Abū Darda' ؓ walking in front of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ, he reprimanded him saying: "you are walking in front of a person who is better than you in this world and in

the hereafter". Then he added : "The Sun did not rise or set on any man better than Abū Bakr ﷺ in the world besides the Prophets". (Rūh-ul-Bayān on the authority of Kashf-ul-Asrār). Therefore, scholars have ruled that teachers and spiritual guides should be treated with similar respect.

لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ (...do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet. - 49:2) This is another etiquette to be observed while in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This verse teaches the believers that they should not raise their voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ nor speak aloud to him as one speaks aloud to another in general discussions. The verse warns that neglecting this etiquette may entail nullification of one's virtuous deeds, because this is a kind of disrespect to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus when this verse was revealed, the blessed Companions became very apprehensive and very cautious. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ said: "By God! O Messenger of Allah, from now till my last breath, I shall speak to you as if someone is whispering." (Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr on the authority of Baihaqī) When this verse was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Umar's ﷺ voice became so low that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to ask him to repeat what he said, so that he could understand what he was saying to him (Ṣīḥāḥ). Thābit Ibn Qays ﷺ had a naturally loud voice. When he heard this verse, he feared that his good deeds would be rendered void, he wept and lowered his voice (Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr on the authority of Baihaqī).

It is Prohibited to Greet and Speak Aloud in front of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ Mausoleum

Qādī Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabī says that respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ after his demise is just as compulsory as it was during his life-time. Therefore, some of the scholars have expressed the view that it is disrespectful to say *salām* or speak very loudly in front of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ mausoleum. Likewise it is discourteous to make noise where Prophetic traditions are recited, because when the blessed words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are being recited, it is compulsory to listen to them silently. In the same manner, it is an unmannerly behaviour to raise voices after his demise when his noble words are repeated.

Ruling

As the Qur'anic injunction "do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger" applies to 'Ulamā' as the heirs of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, likewise the injunction "do not raise your voices above the voice of the

Prophet." is applicable to the great scholars of Islam also. When sitting in their assembly, it is impolite to raise voices so loudly that their voices are suppressed (Qurtubī).

(أَنْ تَجْبَطَ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ) (lest your good deeds become void while you are not aware - 49:2.) This clause is indicating the reason why the Muslims are directed not to raise their voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They are warned that non-compliance of the rule may nullify their virtuous deeds. According to the axioms of Shari'ah and universally established principles, a few perturbing questions arise here. First of all, according to the unanimous view of *Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*, the only thing that can destroy righteous deeds is *kufr* or disbelief. No sin can destroy good deeds. Here the Qur'an addresses the noble Companions and the believers. It addresses them by calling them "O believers" which goes to show that they are "believers" and not "disbelievers" - so how can their righteous works be rendered void? The second point is that "faith" is an act of free will. A person cannot be a believer unless he embraces faith with his own free will. Likewise "disbelief" [*kufr*] is an act of free will. A person does not become *kāfir* [unbeliever] unless he adopts disbelief with his own free will. The concluding phrase "while you are not aware" seems to be against this principle: Failure of good deeds is the punishment of disbelief which ought to be a result of one's own free will and the phrase shows that the punishment lacks "free will". So how can the good deeds go to waste?

My master, the honorable sage of the Ummah has in his Bayān-ul-Qur'an explicated the passage in such a manner that all these perturbations are resolved. He says the meaning of the verse is thus: O Muslims, avoid raising your voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or speaking loudly to him, because in so doing there is the fear that your deeds should be thwarted. The danger in raising your voices above that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ lies in the fact that it is tantamount to courtesy to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is the same as vexing him. It is unthinkable that the noble Companions would intentionally attempt to hurt him. However, it is possible that certain deeds and actions, such as "advancing forward" and "raising voices", without the intention of hurting could upset or offend him. Therefore, all such conducts have been absolutely prohibited, forbidden and regarded as sin. The essential characteristics of

some of the sins are such that the people who commit them lose the Divine aid of repentance and the ability or capacity to perform righteous works. As a result, he gets so engrossed in sins that they lead him to "disbelief" and thus the righteous deeds fail. Likewise hurting one's religious leader, teacher or spiritual guide is a sin that runs the risk of losing the Divine aid. Thus conducts such as "advancing before the Holy Prophet ﷺ" or "raising voices" are such sinful conducts that can cause the Divine help to be taken away. This situation eventually leads one to "disbelief" which destroys one's good works. Because the believer may not have intentionally performed the act of hurting, thus he would not even perceive how he got involved in the process of "disbelief", and "thwarting of good deeds". Some of the scholars have expressed the view that if someone has taken a righteous, holy person as his spiritual guide, then he shows disrespect to him, then such a person may suffer the same consequences: that is, sometimes it becomes the cause of Divine aid being removed and of incurring His wrath which eventually destroys the treasure of "faith". We seek refuge with Allah from it!

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وُرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ) (As for those who call you from behind the apartments, most of them lack understanding. - 49:4) In this verse, Allah Ta'ala has mentioned a third etiquette about dealing with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is directed that when he is at home, one should not call him from outside. Particularly calling him by his name is an unmannered attitude. Reasonable persons would not do it. The term *hujurāt* (translated above as 'apartments') is the plural of *hujrah*. Lexically, it refers to a four-walled apartment or dwelling, comprising a courtyard and a roofed building . In Madinah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had nine wives. Each one of them had a separate apartment, where on different days, he used to stay in succession.

The Apartments of the Mothers of the Faithful

Ibn Sa'd on the authority of 'Atā' Al-Khurāsānī gives a description of these dwellings. He writes that these apartments were built of palm branches and their doors were covered with thick black woolen curtains. Imām Bukhārī in Al-'Adab-ul- Mufrad and Baihaqī in his collection record that Dāwūd Ibn Qais reports that he had visited these "apartments" and estimated that from the door of the "apartment" to the roofed part of the

building, it must be about seven cubits, the room about ten cubits and the height of the roof about eight cubits¹. These apartments of the Mothers of the faithful were included in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ mosque during the reign of Walīd Ibn 'Abd-ul-Malīk at his own command. On that day in Madīnah, people were lamenting and bewailing.

Occasion of Revelation

Imām Baghawī, on the authority of Qatādah رضي الله عنه, reports that the delegation of Banū Tamīm arrived in Madīnah in the afternoon and came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he was resting in one of his apartments. These bedouins were not acquainted with the social manners and etiquette of a civil society. They stood outside the apartment and called out: O Muḥammad, come out to us! On this occasion, verse [4] was revealed (Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, and others record similar reports in differential wordings as quoted by Mazhārī).

Additional Notes

The noble Companions and their followers showed the same respect and courtesy to their scholars and spiritual masters as enjoined by the Qur'ān for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is recorded in Bukhārī and other collections that when Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما wanted to inquire about any Prophetic Tradition from any knowledgeable Companion, he would go to his house and sit at the threshold without calling him or knocking at the door. He would wait there until the Companion himself comes out. When he came out on his own, he would ask him about the Tradition. However, the scholar himself would say to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما: "O cousin of Allah's Messenger, why did you not knock at the door and inform me about your arrival?" Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما would reply: "A scholar in his community is like a prophet, and Allah has directed us that we should wait until he comes out on his own. Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah رضي الله عنهما says, "I never knock on the door of any scholar at any time, but I wait until he himself has emerged and then meet him (Rūh-ul-Ma'āni).

Ruling

In the clause of verse حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ "...until you come out to them ...49:5", the prepositional phrase *ilaihim* "to them" is a restrictive phrase, and it implies that people must wait until the Holy Prophet ﷺ emerges to talk to them, but if he has emerged for some other reason or purpose,

(1) One Cubit= about 18 inches

even in this case it is not appropriate to talk to him. The speakers should wait until a suitable situation or occasion arises for them to speak: that is, they should speak about their particular issue when the Holy Prophet ﷺ turns his attention to them for that purpose.

Verse 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ فَتَبَيَّنُوهُ أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا
بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَذِيرِينَ ﴿٦﴾

O those who believe, if a sinful person brings you a report, verify its correctness, lest you harm a people out of ignorance then become remorseful on what you did. [6]

Background of Revelation

According to Ibn Kathir, it is reported in Musnad of Ahmad that Ḥarīth Ibn Ḏirār Ibn Abī Ḏirār, the leader of the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq, whose daughter Sayyidah Juwairiyah رضي الله عنها was one of the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and he called him towards Islam and asked him to pay his Zakah. He says, "I embraced Islam and pledged to pay Zakāh, and said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that I would go to my people, call them towards Islam and ask them to pay Zakāh. Those who would accept my invitation and pay the compulsory alms, I would collect their alms. I requested that on a designated date of a designated month, a collector be sent to me, so that the alms might be handed over to him." Accordingly, when Ḥarīth had collected the alms of the believers and the alms collector did not arrive on the designated date or even long after that, he feared that may be the Holy Prophet ﷺ is displeased with them for some reason or the other. Otherwise it was unlikely for the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to keep his promise. Harith expressed his apprehension to the leaders of the new Muslims, and wanted them to go to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had sent Walīd Ibn ‘Uqbah to collect the Zakāh from them. However, on his way he thought that the members of that tribe are his old enemies and feared that they might kill him. With this fear he

returned to Madīnah, and said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they refused to pay *Zakāh*, and wanted to kill him. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ became very angry, and under the command of Khālid Ibn Walīd ﷺ he dispatched a force of fighters in the way of Allah. On the one hand, this contingent was dispatched, and on the other hand Ḥārith Ibn Dirār with his people was on his way to meet the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The two groups met near Madīnah. Ḥārith inquired: "To whom have you been sent?" They replied: "We are sent to you". Ḥārith inquired: "for what purpose?" They narrated the mission of Walīd Ibn ‘Uqbah who reported to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq refused to pay *Zakāh* and planned to kill him. Ḥārith said on oath, "I swear by Allah who sent Muḥammad as His true Messenger, Walid did not arrive in the location, nor did I see him. Since no envoy had come to us at the appointed location, I apprehended that you are annoyed with me due to some shortcoming on my part. Therefore, I have come here. Ḥārith says that the present verse of Sūrah Al-Hujurāt was revealed on this occasion (Ibn Kathīr).

Other versions have it that Walīd Ibn ‘Uqbah did go to the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq. As the tribe was expecting the Holy Prophet's ﷺ envoy to arrive on a designated date, they came out of their settlement as a mark of respect to welcome him. Walīd Ibn ‘Uqbah suspected that they might have come out to kill him on account of their old hostility. Therefore he returned instantly from there, and went up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and reported to him, according to his suspicion, that they were not willing to pay the alms and wanted to kill him. On hearing this report, the Holy Prophet ﷺ dispatched Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ﷺ to make a thorough investigation, so that appropriate measures could be taken. Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ﷺ arrived near the settlement at night and encamped there. He selected a few of his men and sent them furtively as spies into the location to investigate. They returned and reported that the members of the tribe were Muslims and believers; they were regular with their prayers and in paying their alms; and they did not find the tribe doing anything contrary to Islam. Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ﷺ came back, and reported the whole story to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This verse was revealed on that occasion (Ibn-Kathīr - summary of several reports).

Ruling

On the basis of this verse, it may be ruled that if a mischief-monger, sinner, wicked or corrupt person complains about any person or nation, or accuses them of any wrong-doing, it is not lawful to act upon the sole information or evidence of such a person without making a thorough investigation.

Injunctions and Rulings Related to Verse [6]

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ in Ahkām-ul-Qur'ān says that this verse indicates that it is not lawful to accept any information conveyed by a sinful person and act upon it unless it is investigated by other sources and confirmed. This verse contains the injunction *fatabayyanu* (verify its correctness). In another reading the word '*tathabbatu*' conveys the same meaning. The sense is: "Do not rush into taking actions or measures; be stable, and stand firmly in your place; and do not be easily moved or shaken. Wait until the news or information is confirmed by other independent sources. Since it is not lawful to accept the information or report of an ungodly sinful person, then the testimony of such a person would not be acceptable with greater force, because every testimony is a statement which is confirmed by a kind of oath."

Therefore, according to majority of scholars a statement or evidence of an ungodly person, in terms of Shari'ah, is not acceptable. However, all scholars agree that as far as the common worldly affairs are concerned, it is not necessary to ascertain the accuracy or truth of every news and the reliability of every informer. The jurists are clear that this rule of law does not apply in the case of ordinary matters, because the rule is governed by an effective cause which is laid down in the explicit text of this verse: لَعْنَهُمْ أَقْوَمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ (lest you harm a people out of ignorance - 49:6). Thus matters which are not governed by the effective cause will be an exception to, and excluded from, the rule of this verse. For instance, if a wicked person, or for that matter even an unbeliever, delivers a gift to someone, stating that this gift has been sent by a certain person, it would be lawful to accept the gift and the statement. Details may be found in books of Fiqh, such as in *mu'in-ul-hukkām* and others. I have given the details in part six of Ahkām-ul-Qur'ān [Arabic version]. Learned scholars may peruse them there.

An Important Question and Answer Regarding the Truthfulness of the Companions

Authentic *Aḥāadīth* verify that this verse was revealed in connection with Walīd Ibn ‘Uqbah, and in the verse he is referred to as *fāsiq* (sinner). Apparently, it goes to show that a *sahābi* (Companion) can be a *fāsiq*. This is in conflict with the universally established maxim *الصحابة كلهم عدول* (the Companions are all truthful and reliable). None of their statements, reports or testimony can be doubted. ‘Allāmah ‘Alusī in *Rūh-ul- Ma‘āni* says that the truth of the matter is according to the majority of the scholars, the blessed Companions are not infallible; it is possible for them to commit sins - major sins which is *fisq*; at the time of committing the sin they will be dealt with in the appropriate manner in terms of the punishment prescribed for that act; and if any of them is found guilty of lying, his news, information, report or testimony will be rejected. However, on the basis of the express texts of the Qur’ān and Sunnah, *Ahl-us-suunah wal-Jama‘ah* believe that Companion can, though, commit sins, they do not persist in it. There is no companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who has not repented and purified himself after committing a sin. The Qur’ān, referring to the general class of the Companions, announces in general terms (... رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ... Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him - 98:8). The pleasure of Allah is not possible without forgiveness of sins. Qādī Abū Ya‘la says that Allah’s pleasure is one of His eternal attributes. He expresses His pleasure only for those about whom He knows they will die whilst seeking His pleasure (Ibn-Taimiyyah in *Aṣ-ṣārim-ul-Maslūl*).

In sum: From amongst the magnificent group of the noble Companions, it is possible for a handful of them to commit a sin sometime or the other, but Divine aid comes to their rescue and they immediately repent. Through the blessing of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, Allah had made Shari‘ah their nature. As result, it was very rare for them to do anything contrary to Shari‘ah and very unlikely to commit sins. It was natural for them to dedicate themselves to performing righteous deeds in conformity with the Holy Prophet's ﷺ paradigm and the principles established by Islam. They exerted such efforts in obeying Allah and His Holy Prophet ﷺ in all matters of life, the example of which is never found in any of the previous religious communities. In comparison to the

uncountable good works, merits and excellence to their credit, even if they commit a sin once in a life-time, it would be quashed or would be counted as non-existent. Furthermore, *hadīth* collections record a number of incidents where the noble Companions expressed their supreme love and devotion for Allah and His Holy Prophet ﷺ. They expressed their highest degree of fear for Allah at the time of committing the most minor sins and repented forthwith. We have on record that some of the Companions presented themselves for punishment when they did something wrong and others tied themselves up to the column of the mosque; and so on. A *hadīth* informs us that "He who repents on a sin is like him who has not committed any sin". The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُدْهِنُ الْسَّيِّئَاتِ

Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds. [Surah Hud: 114]

This rule applies to them with greater force, since their good deeds are not like the good deeds of the general class of people. In fact, the status of their good deeds has been described in the collections of Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī on the authority of Sa'īd Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنهما:

وَاللَّهُ لَمْ شَهَدْ رَجُلٌ مِّنْهُمْ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَغْتَرُ فِيهِ وَجْهُهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ
عَمَلِ احَدِكُمْ وَلَوْ عَمِرْ عَمْرُ نُوحٍ

"By Allah, anyone of them who participated in a *jihād* with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his face got covered with dust is better than your life-long obedience and worship, even if you attained the age of Nūh عليه السلام."

Therefore, they will receive the same punishment that is prescribed for a sin or crime which they might have committed. However, despite this it is not lawful for any of us to regard any of them as *fāsiq*. Consequently, if any Companion during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ committed a sin or crime which could be the cause of producing in him the effect of *fisq*, as a result of which he might have been referred to as a *fāsiq* on that account, it does not become possible for that *fisq* to be regarded as his permanent characteristic to call him, God forbid!, as a *fāsiq* for all times to come (Rūh-ul-Ma'āni).

Nevertheless, it is not at all necessary that in the current verse, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah is categorically referred to as *fāsiq*. Despite the fact that the

verse is supposed to have been revealed in his incident, it does not mean that the word 'fāsiq' is used for him, because before this incident, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah had not done any such thing on account of which he could be referred to as *fāsiq*. An analysis of the incident of Banul-Muṣṭaliq indicates that he conveyed an incorrect information about that tribe which, acting in good faith, he thought was true whereas in reality it was not. Therefore, the plain import of the current verse would be that it simply establishes the general rule that the news conveyed by a *fāsiq* would be unacceptable. However, it may be emphasized that Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah was not a *fāsiq*, but his information, because of strong external context, did not seem acceptable. As a result, the Holy Prophet ﷺ refrained from taking any measures merely on his information, and sent Khālid Ibn Walīd ﷺ for proper investigation. If this is the case of the news conveyed by a *bona fide* reliable and righteous person, then with the stronger reason a *fāsiq*'s news should be rejected and should not be acted upon. The truthfulness of the Companions is discussed fully by this author in his book "The Status of the Companions" which is already published in Urdu. It will partly be discussed under forthcoming verses 9-10.

Verses 7 - 8

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيْكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ طَ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِيْ كَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ
لَعْنَتُمْ وَلِكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِيْ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ
إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفُرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ طَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّشِيدُونَ ۝۷
فَضُلاًّ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً طَ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝۸

And know that among you there is the Messenger of Allah. If he obeys you in many a matter, you will certainly fall into hardship. But Allah has endeared to you the Faith, and caused it to look beautiful to your hearts, and made detestable to you the disbelief and sins and disobedience. Such people are rightly guided, [7] as a grace from Allah, and as a blessing. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [8]

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ Decision is Better

According to the previous verse, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah reported that

Banul-Muṣṭaliq had turned apostate and refused to pay Zakāh. At this the blessed Companions were disturbed and infuriated. They expressed the view that *jihād* should be declared on them immediately, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ rejected his report on the basis of strong circumstantial evidence to the contrary. He sent Khālid Ibn Walīd رضي الله عنه for investigation. In the foregoing verse, the Qur'ān enjoined that if there are strong reasons to doubt the report conveyed by any person, it is not lawful to act upon it before investigation. In this verse the noble Companions are given one more guideline: 'Although when you heard the news about Banul-Mustaliq's apostasy, you reacted the way you reacted, and that was on account of your religious zeal and enthusiasm, yet your view was not right and proper. The decision taken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ proved to be better (Mažhari). Thus in matters requiring consultation it is proper to express a view but it is not proper for you to exert efforts to get the Holy Prophet ﷺ to act upon your opinion. Although there is a rare possibility that an opinion expressed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in some worldly matters comes to be against worldly expedience, and this is not contrary to the station of his prophethood, yet Allah has gifted him with such insight, perspicacity and discernment which you do not have. Therefore, if the Holy Prophet ﷺ were to follow your opinion, in many matters, you will suffer loss and fall into difficulties. If rarely ever your opinion is right or proper, it is still better to abandon your opinion and obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ. By doing so it is possible that you may suffer some worldly loss, but it would not be as harmful as his following your opinion. In this case, even if you suffer any worldly loss, the reward of obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a better compensation.

Lexically, the word عَنْتُمْ is derived from عَنْتَ and it connotes "to commit a sin or crime" and it also means "to suffer from hardship". In this context, both connotations appropriately fit (Qurtubī).

Verses 9 - 10

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتْنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ افْتَلُوا فَاصْلِحُوهَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ
إِحْدِيهِمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفْئِي إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَاصْلِحُوهَا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَاقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ

الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْرَاجٌ فَاصْلِحُوهُ بَيْنَ أَخْوَيْكُمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرَحَّمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

And if two groups of the believers fight each other, seek reconciliation between them. And if one of them commits aggression against the other, fight the one that commits aggression until it comes back to Allah's command. So if it comes back, seek reconciliation between them with fairness, and maintain justice. Surely Allah loves those who maintain justice. [9] All believers are but brothers, therefore seek reconciliation between your two brothers, and fear Allah, so that you may be blessed with mercy. [10]

Linkage

In the foregoing verses the rights of the Prophet ﷺ were set out. They also laid down the mannerism in which he should be treated. The verses prohibited any act that would annoy or hurt him. Now this set of verses [9-10] establishes the manners, mores, injunctions, and mutual rights and obligations to be observed in individual and social life. The common value of all these rules is to avoid causing any inconvenience to the members of the society.

Occasion of Revelation

The commentators have narrated several incidents as a background of the revelation of these verses. Among them is the clash that took place between two Muslim groups. It is not inconceivable that the totality of these incidents might have been the occasion of revelation. It is also possible that one of these incidents has been the cause of revelation and the other incidents, being similar, were also termed as the occasion of revelation.

Although the immediate addressees of this verse are rulers and those in authority who have the means to fight and wage war, [as stated by Abū Ḥayyān in Al-Baḥr and preferred by ‘Ālusi in Rūh-ul-Ma‘āni] all Muslims are addressed in this verse indirectly to assist those in authority in this matter. Where there is no leader, ‘amir, king or president, the rule is that the two warring parties should be advised, as far as possible, to cease war. If this is not possible, common people are ordered to stay away from both warring groups: they should neither oppose nor aid any one of them.

[Bayān-ul-Qur'ān].

Related Issues and Injunctions

There are several forms of mutual fighting between two Muslim parties: [1] both parties are subjects of a Muslim government; [2] neither of the parties is the subject of a Muslim government; [3] one of the parties is the subject of a Muslim government, but not the other. In the first case, it is compulsory for common Muslims to bring about an understanding between them and try to stop the mutual fighting. If they do not cease fighting by negotiations, then it is imperative for the Muslim ruler to take measures against them. If both parties cease fighting by the intervention of the Islamic government, then the laws of retaliation, retribution and blood-wit will apply. If they do not cease, then both parties will be treated like rebels. If one of the parties withdrew and the other persisted in oppression and transgression, then the persistent group will be treated like a rebel group. The obedient group will be designated as "Adil" (just). The detailed laws pertaining to rebels may be perused in books of Islamic law. Briefly, the law comprehends the following: Before fighting, their weapons must be seized and confiscated. Then they must be arrested and kept in prison until they repent. Neither in the course of fighting nor after fighting should their children be enslaved. Their wealth should not be treated like the spoils of war. In fact, their wealth will be held in trust until they repent. After repentance their belongings will be returned to them. In the above verses, we come across the following directive:

فَإِنْ فَأَتُوهُمْ فَأَصْلِحُوهُمْ بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا

'...So if it comes back, seek reconciliation between them with fairness, and maintain justice.' [49:9]

It means that if the belligerent party ceases fighting, then do not only stop fighting but also think about eliminating the cause of war and mutual dissatisfaction, so that the heart-burnings may come to an end. All enmity and hostilities will thus cease and an atmosphere of brotherhood may prevail for all times to come. Since these people have fought against the Muslim ruler, it was possible that they would not be treated by him equitably. Therefore, the Qur'ān lays stress on setting things right between them equitably and justly, so that the rights of no one are violated [Adapted from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān with reference to Hidāyah].

Ruling

If a very powerful group of Muslims revolts against the Muslim ruler, then it is necessary for the ruler to first hear out their complaint or cause of their dissatisfaction. If a doubt or a misunderstanding has arisen in their mind about some matter, it should be removed. If they show such cause on the basis of which it is permissible in Shari'ah to oppose a Muslim leader or ruler, like unjust behavior on the part of the government, it is essential for the general body of Muslims to assist the group, so that the leader or ruler may refrain from his tyranny, provided that his tyranny is proved beyond any shadow of doubt (Ibn-ul-Humam; Mažhari). If they cannot show any clearly legitimate reason for their dissatisfaction, revolt, disobedience, and waging war against the Muslim ruler, it is permitted for Muslims to wage war against the rebels. Imām Shafī'i رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى held that the Muslims should not initiate fight against the rebels unless they first start the fight [Mažhari]. This law applies when it is positively and unquestionably clear that the group is rebellious. However, if it is difficult to determine which group is rebellious and which is just, because each party has a valid Sharī'i argument to justify its course of action, then the pros and cons of both parties may be weighed to determine the party that is "just" on the principle of probability. If the juristic argument of one party seems to someone more convincing, it is permitted for him to assist such a group. If someone cannot prefer the standpoint of any one of them, he should remain neutral, as it happened in the civil wars of the Battle of Camel and the Battle of Siffin when many noble Companions remained aloof.

Conflicts of the Noble Companions

Imām Abū Bakr Ibn-ul-'Arabī says that this verse of battle between Muslims covers all cases. It includes the case where both parties prepare for war on grounds of a principle of Shari'ah. Civil wars of the noble Companions were of this nature. Qurṭubī, quoting this view of Ibn-ul-'Arabi, explains the actual situation of the Battle of Camel and the Battle of Siffin and gives guidelines for later generations of Muslims to follow in the light of the battles of the blessed Companions. This author has dealt with this subject in "Ahkām-ul-Qur'ān" in Arabic and his Urdu book "Maqāme-Şahābah". The summary of the discussion given in that book with reference to Qurṭubī (V.16, P.322) is as follows:

It is not permitted to attribute categorically, and with certainty,

to any of the Companions that he was absolutely wrong in his action, because each of them acted according to his own Ijtihād. Their objective was to seek the pleasure of Allah. The Companions are all our leaders, and it is enjoined upon us that we should hold back our tongue from talking about their mutual differences, and always speak the best things about them. Prophet's companionship is a highly honourable position which should not be violated. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to revile them or talk bad about them, and informed us that they have been forgiven and that Allah is pleased with them. Besides, there is the *Hadith* regarding Sayyidnā Talhah رضي الله عنه reaching us through several transmitting authorities that:

ان طلحة شهيد يمشي على وجه الأرض

"Talhah is a martyr walking on the face of the earth."

If Sayyidnā Talhah رضي الله عنه was committing a clear sin by going out to wage war against Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, he could not attain the high status of a martyr. In the same way, if his act might be regarded as a failure to perform his duty on the basis of a clearly wrong interpretation, he would still not attain the status of martyrdom. Martyrdom is attained only when a person is killed in obedience of Allah. Therefore, it is necessary to construe the matter of the Companions in terms of the principle mentioned above.

Another proof of this is available in authentic and well-established *Aḥāadīth* which are reported by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه himself where the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "The killer of Zubair is in Hell." Furthermore, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه reports that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Give news to the killer of Sayyidah Ṣafiyah's رضي الله عنها son that he will be in Hell." In the light of this we need to believe that Sayyidnā Zubair رضي الله عنه and Sayyidnā Talhah رضي الله عنه were not sinners or disobedient to Allah in the position taken by them in the battle. Otherwise the Holy Prophet ﷺ would not have referred to Sayyidnā Talhah رضي الله عنه as a martyr, nor would he predict about the killer of Zubair that he would be in Hell. Also, he is counted among the ten who were given the glad tidings of attaining Paradise. Traditions relating to this subject have almost reached the grade of continuity [*tawāṭur*] and the Traditions are referred to as *hadīth mutawāṭir*.

Likewise the noble Companions, who did not participate in the battles on either side, cannot be regarded as defaulters because their behaviour,

conduct and attitude in this matter was also based on their *ijtihād*, and Allah maintained them thus. Therefore, it is not proper in any sense of the word to curse them, to taunt them, to hold them as sinners, and to neglect their virtues, their struggles and their great religious stations. Some of the scholars were posed the question: what is your view regarding the blood that was shed in the battles that took place among the blessed Companions? They simply recited the following verse of the Qur'ān:

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. [2:134]"

The same question was posed to another scholar. He replied: "Allah saved my hands from being soiled with that blood. Now I will not soil my tongue with it." He meant that he does not wish to make the mistake of categorically adjudging any one of the groups as the defaulter.

'Allāmah Ibn-Fuwarraq رحمة الله تعالى says:

"Some of our colleagues feel that the example of the conflicts that took place between the noble Companions is like that of the episodes of conflict that occurred between Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ and his brothers. They, despite their mutual differences, did not lose their status of *wilāyah* and *nubuwah*. The same principle applies to the matter of conflicts that occurred between the Companions."

Sayyidnā Muḥasibi رحمة الله تعالى says: "As far as this blood-shed is concerned, it is difficult for us to say anything because there was a difference of opinion in this regard among the noble Companions themselves."

When Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمة الله تعالى was asked the question concerning the wars between the noble Companions, he replied:

"Those were fights in which the Companions were present and we were not. They knew all the circumstances and we do not know them. The matter in which the Companions are unanimous, we follow; and the matter in which there is difference of opinion, we observe silence."

Sayyidnā Muhasibi رحمة الله تعالى says:

"We concur with Hasan Al-Baṣrī رحمة الله تعالى . We know that when the noble Companions meddled in any matter, they knew fully well why they were doing it. Our task is merely to follow them where they are unanimous, and where they differ we observe silence. We should not on our own introduce new ideas. We are assured that they must have exercised *ijtihād* and sought the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, in matters of religion they are all beyond doubt."

Verses 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخِرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا
مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنْ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوهُنَّ
أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابُزُوهُنَّ بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِعْصَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ
وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

O those who believe, no men should ever mock at other men, since it is possible that the latter are better than the former, nor (should) women (ever mock) at other women, since it is possible that the latter women are better than the former ones. And do not find fault with one another, nor call one another with bad nicknames. Bad is the name of sinfulness after embracing Faith. * And whoever does not repent, such people are the wrongdoers. [11]

Prohibition of Ridiculing One Another

The beginning part of this chapter laid down the Prophet's ﷺ rights and the etiquettes to be observed when dealing with him. Then the Holy Qur'an has started mentioning the mutual rights and good manners for the general body of Muslims to be observed among themselves. The injunctions laid down in the preceding two verses related to the collective reformation of the society. Now the current verse mentions the rights and etiquettes to be observed between individuals. Thus the verse prohibits three social evils: [1] ridiculing one another; [2] finding fault with one

(*). It means that calling others with bad nicknames is a sinful act, and the real bad name for a person after embracing Faith is that he is known among people for sinful acts. Therefore, if a Muslim commits the sin of calling others with bad nicknames, and it is known among people, then the real bad name is earned by himself, and not by the person whom he has abused with that nickname.
(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

another; and [3] reviling one another with nicknames.

According to Qurṭubī, mocking or scoffing does not only connote mocking with the tongue, but it also implies mimicking someone, making pointed references to him, laughing at his words, his works, his appearance, his dress or calling people's attention to some of his defects, so that they may laugh at him. Mocking includes all of this. By the clear text of the Qur'ān, poking fun at someone or ridiculing him is absolutely forbidden.

Stylistically, the Qur'ān has, on this occasion, addressed men and women separately. Men are referred to as *qawm*, a word that is specifically reserved for male members of the human society, though by extension the word most often includes the female members of the human society as well. The Qur'ān, however, generally employs the word *qawm* for both men and women, but here it is specifically used for men in contradistinction to the word *nisa'* which specifically refers to women. Here both men and women are reminded that mocking one another is a disdainful and evil act. They must refrain from it, because it is very likely that the man who is mocked at may be better than the mocking person and the woman who is mocked at may be better than the mocker. Here the Qur'ān prohibits men from mocking other men, and women from mocking other women. This, however, does not mean that it is permitted for men to mock at women or for women to mock at men. The actual reason for making separate mention of the two sexes is that Islam does not allow free intermingling of the two sexes. Ridiculing each other generally occurs where there is such an intermingling. Therefore, in a Muslim society it is inconceivable that men would mock a woman or women would mock a man in an intermingling situation.

In short: no one dare make mockery of a person whose body, face, shape and stature are defective, imperfect, impaired or deformed, because he does not know that the other person, in the sight of Allah, might be better than him on account of his sincerity and purity of heart. When the righteous predecessors heard this verse, they adopted a conducive attitude: For example, Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Shurahbil رض said that he would not laugh at a person when he sees him drink milk direct from the udders of a goat, lest he should become one like him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رض said: "I would not like to scoff at a dog, lest I be

metamorphosed into a dog (Qurtubī)."

¹⁰ It is recorded in *Şahih* of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah does not look at your faces and your wealth; He looks at your hearts and your works." Qurtubī derives a legal maxim from this tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that in any matter it is not proper to pass a categorical judgment on the basis of overt evidence or circumstances, because it is possible that a person's overt actions might seem to be good but in the sight of Allah, on account of the insincerity and impurity of his heart, they could be bad, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's hearts. On the contrary, a person's overt actions might seem to us bad, but in the sight of Allah, on account of the sincerity and purity of his heart, they could serve as an expiation of the bad actions, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's heart.

The next thing that is prohibited in the verse is *lamz* which connotes to find fault with someone or to upbraid him. The verse says, وَلَا تَنْمِرُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ literally it means, "Do not find fault with your selves." But the intention is: "Do not find fault with one another-" [49:11] as is seen in the translation above. This expression is similar to the expression لَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ "...And do not kill yourselves - [4:29]". Although the verse commands "do not kill yourselves", it purports to say "do not kill one another". This expression indicates that, from one point of view, killing another person amounts to killing oneself. Often it happens that if one person kills another person, the victim's supporters kill the murderer. Even if this does not happen, a Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. Killing one's brother is like killing oneself and rendering oneself crippled, helpless and powerless. Similarly, the expression لَا تَنْمِرُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ 'and not find fault with yourselves' means when you find fault with others and upbraid them, others will find fault with you and upbraid you, because no man is normally free from any fault. Scholars have formulated the maxim: فِيکَ عَيُوبٌ وَلِلنَّاسِ أَعْيُنٌ "You have faults and people have eyes" with which they see them. Thus if someone seeks out the imperfections of some other person and broadcasts them, the latter will do the same in return. If, however, he exercises patience and evades retaliation to his verbal attacks, it comes down to the same thing: If one considers carefully, he will find that defaming and despising one's Muslim brother is actually casting aspersions on oneself.

Scholars have suggested that the satisfaction, well-being and happiness of man lies in examining his own faults and finding ways of mending them. This approach to life will give him no time to find fault with others and broadcast it. How well the last king of India Bahadur Shah Zafar has versified it!

نہ تھی حال کی جب ہمیں اپنی خبر رہے دیکھتے لوگوں کے عیب و ہنر
پڑی اپنی بُرا نیوں پر جو نظر تو جہان میں کوئی بُرا نہ رہا

As long as we were unaware of our own faults, we looked into the faults and failings of others; But when we looked at our own faults there remained no one faulty in the world.

The third thing that is prohibited in the verse is reviling one another with nicknames which are offensive to them, e.g. calling a person lame, hands cropped, blind or one-eyed; or referring to him by other offensive nicknames. Sayyidnā Abū Jabirah Anṣārī ﷺ says, "This verse was revealed in connection with us. When we migrated to Madinah, most of us had two or three names. Some of them were popularised in order to denigrate, defame or belittle the bearer of the name. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was not aware of this situation; as a result he sometimes called them by one of these offensive names unwittingly. The noble Companions informed the Prophet ﷺ that the name offends the bearer of that name. This verse was revealed on that occasion." Sayyidnā Ibn-'Abbās ؓ says that prohibition of *tanābuz bil-alqāb* means that if a person committed a sin or performed an evil deed from which he repented and mended his ways, it is unlawful for anyone to call him by denigrating names, such as thief, an adulterer, a drunkard or any such name. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Anyone who denigrates a Muslim who has committed a sin of which he has repented, Allah takes it upon Himself that He will get the person to commit the very same sin and expose him to embarrassment and humiliation in this world and in the Hereafter [Qurṭubī].

Exception to the Rule

There are some nicknames, which though apparently offensive, are not intended to defame or insult the bearer of that name, but they rather serve as a symbol of identification. That is why scholars have permitted to attach titles to the names of the traditionalists - like *A'raj* [lame, cripple]

or *aḥdab* [humpbacked, hunchbacked] provided they are not intended to insult or defame. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself named a Companion *dhul-yadain* because his hands were relatively long. ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mubārak was posed the question: "In the *asanid* [chains of authorities on which a tradition is based] we come across names to which are attached titles like Ḥamid At-Ṭawil [Ḥamid, the Tall], Sulaimān al-A‘mash [Sulaimān the weak-eyed] and

Marwān al-Asfar [Marwān, the Yellow]: are these titles allowed?" He replied: "If your intention is not to insult or defame, but rather to complete identification, it is permitted." [Qurṭubī]

It is Sunnah to call people by Good Titles

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that it is the right of a believer to call his fellow-believers by good names and titles which they like the best. Therefore the use of *kunniyyah* [agnomen/cognomen] had become commonplace in Arabia. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also favoured this, and consequently he himself bestowed appropriate titles on some of the individual Companions, e.g. Abū Bakr Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه received the title of ‘Atīq [the noble], Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, the title of *Farūq* [he who distinguishes truth from falsehood], Sayyidnā Ḥamzah the title of *Asadullāh* [the lion of Allah] and Khālid Ibn Walīd, the title of *Saifullāh* [the sword of Allah].

Verse 12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظُّنُنِ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظُّنُنِ إِثْمٌ وَلَا
تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا إِيَّاهُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ
لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهُتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

O those who believe, abstain from many of the suspicions. Some suspicions are sins. And do not be curious (to find out faults of others), and do not backbite one another. Does one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. [12]

Analysis of the Verse

This verse too comprises injunctions relating to mutual rights and manners to be observed in social life. It prohibits three things: [1] *zann* [unfounded suspicion], the details to follow; [2] *tajassus* [spying, looking secretly into the faults of others]; and [3] *ghibah* [backbiting, speaking ill of a person behind his back which if he heard would hurt or injure his feelings].

[1] Prohibition of Unfounded Suspicion

Zann primarily denotes assumption on probable evidence. In the first instance, the Qur'an sets down "Abstain from many of the suspicions." and gives reason for that: "some suspicion are sins.". This shows that not all types of suspicion is a sin. Thus it is incumbent on the readers to investigate which type is a sin, so that they may avoid it. If the uneasy feeling and the conviction that something is wrong, someone is guilty, or some danger is afoot is based on partial evidence, and not confirmed by out-and-out evidence, it is not permitted to act on it. Scholars and jurists have given a detailed account of it. Qurṭubī says that in this context *Zann* connotes "accusation", that is, a charge of wrongdoing, as with guilt, crime, offense or blame without any strong evidence. Imām Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ in *Aḥkām-ul-Qur'an* gives the following details. *Zann* is divisible into four categories. [1] prohibited; [2] imperative; [3] recommended, desirable; and [4] permissible. Distrust of Allah or suspecting His trust is prohibited. For instance, it is not permitted to think ill of Allah in that He will punish him or keep him in calamity all the time without forgiving him or showing mercy to him, thus despairing of His grace. Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا يموتَنَّ احْدَكُمْ إِلَّا وَهُوَ يَحْسِنُ الظَّنَّ بِاللَّهِ

"None of you should die without having favourable thoughts about Allah."

According to another *hadīth*, Allah Ta'āla says:

أَنَا عَنْ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي

"I treat my servants the way they think about me."

This shows that holding favourable thoughts about Allah is compulsory and thinking ill of Him is prohibited. Likewise it is prohibited

to entertain suspicion, without rational grounds, about Muslims whose outer conditions show that they are good and noble.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

أيّاكم والظُّنُّ فَإِنَّ الظُّنُّ أَكْذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ

"Avoid suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false talks...".

In this context, *Zann* by common consent of scholars stands for thinking ill of a Muslim without any concrete proof. However, if there is a matter in which it is necessary to take a decision in either way, and there is no absolute and clear-cut proof based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah for that particular situation, it is imperative to act on the strength of the best possible assessment, termed in Islamic jurisprudence as '*Az-zann-ul-ghalib*'. This is the approved practice in cases that come to the law-courts for settlement. In a court of law, a judge has to deliver his decision on the basis of the principle of "the best possible assessment" relying on the testimony of people worthy of confidence, even though there is the possibility that one of the witnesses at that particular moment might have lied. The testimony of the witness is based on "best assessment" and not on "absolute certainty". The judge does not have direct knowledge of the facts of the matter, nor is there a transparent text of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In cases like these where one or the other decision has to be taken, and the absolute knowledge of the reality cannot possibly be attained, there is no way out but to formulate a judgement on the basis of 'best possible assessment'.

Likewise when the direction of *qiblah* is not known, nor is there a person that can show one the direction of *qiblah*, it is compulsory for him to determine it on the basis of "best possible assessment". If a person has destroyed a valuable thing of someone, and a compensation has been imposed on him, he is liable to pay the value of it on the basis of 'best possible assessment'.

The example of permissible *Zann* is like that of a person performing prayers and in the course of it suspects whether he has performed three *rak'at* or four, he is permitted to apply the 'best possible assessment' and complete the prayers accordingly. If, however, he does not wish to apply this principle, but wishes to act on the principle of 'certainty', thinking

that he has certainly performed three *rak'āt*, and thus completes the fourth one, that too is possible.

And desirable *Zann* refers to having favourable thoughts about every Muslim. That is rewardable [condensed from *Jaṣṣāṣ*].

Qurṭubī quotes the Qur'ānic verse

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعُتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا

'...why, when you (O believers,) heard of it, did the believing men and women not think well on their own selves - [24:12]!'

This verse emphasizes to have good thoughts about the believers. The following aphorism apparently seems contrary to this rule:

إِنَّ مِنَ الْحَرَمِ سُوءَ الظَّنِّ

"It is prudence to have ill thoughts about every person."

But this means to be as cautious when dealing with others as one would deal in suspicious cases: e.g. one should not hand over one's thing to anyone without strong reliance. It does not mean that he should regard anyone as a thief or run him down. In brief, one should take precautionary measures in the predicament one is placed in without labeling people as thieves or perfidious.

[2] Prohibition of Spying

The second social evil that is prohibited in the verse is *tajassus*, spying or prying secretly into the faults of others. An alternative reading of تَجَسُّسٌ *tajassus* [with "J"] is تَحَسُّسٌ *tahassus* [with "H"]. In a *ḥadīth* recorded in *Sahīhain* on the authority of Abū Hurairah ﷺ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا تَجَسُّسُوا وَلَا تَحَسُّسُوا

"...do not spy on one another; do not look for other's faults...".

The two words in Arabic are near-synonyms. *Akhfash* draws attention to the nuances or subtle differences in their meaning: *tajassus* connotes looking into the affairs of people which they have kept hidden, whilst *tahassus* connotes searching in general as in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān.

تَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَآخِيهِ

'...search for Yūsuf and his brother' - [12:87]

However, the term *tahassus* [searching], like *tajassus* [spying], could have an evil connotation in which case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited it. The verse signifies that one may take into account what is presented in evidence, but it is not permitted to search for faults that are not overt. The Holy Prophet ﷺ says:

لَا تَغْتَالُو الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُو عُورَاتَهُمْ فَإِنْ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ عُورَاتَهُمْ يَتَّبِعَ اللَّهَ عُورَتَهُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعَ اللَّهَ عُورَتَهُ يَفْضُحَهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ (قرطبي)

"Do not speak ill of Muslims behind their backs, and do not search out their faults, for he who searches out their faults will have his faults searched out by Allah, and he whose faults are searched out by Allah will be exposed by Him, even though he should be in the interior of his house" [Qurṭubī].

Bayān-ul-Qur'ān interprets that *tajassus* [spying] and *tahassus* [searching] include the sense of listening to people without their permission when they are talking, or eavesdropping at their doors. However, if there is an apprehension that some member of the Muslim community may be harmed by some mischief-makers, it is permitted for others to spy to protect the innocent and peaceful people, and search furtively for the intentions and conspiracies of such people who are a danger to the society.

[3] Prohibition of Backbiting

The third social evil this verse prohibits is *ghibah* [backbiting]. This connotes speaking ill of a person behind his back which if he heard would hurt or injure his feelings, even if what was said about him was the truth; if what was said about him was untruth, it is slander or false accusation. The prohibition of slander is prohibited elsewhere in the Qur'ān. In the definition of backbiting the phrase "behind his back / in his absence" appears. This does not mean that it is permissible to say hurtful things in the presence of somebody. This may not be backbiting, but it certainly falls under *lamz* which is prohibited in the preceding verse.

أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا

(Does one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? -
49:12)

This verse sternly warns against disgracing a Muslim and compares it to eating the flesh of a human being. If the victim of disgrace is present

before the offender, it is like eating the flesh of a living person, and the Holy Qur'ān has termed it as '*lamz*' which is prohibited in verse 11, as well as in another Sūrah by saying,

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لِّمَزَةٍ

'Woe to every backbiter, derider [104:1]'

And if the victim is not present, and someone speaks ill of him in a way that he is insulted, then it is like eating the flesh of a dead human being. Just as it does not cause any physical torture to a dead body, backbiting does not hurt the victim when he is not aware of it, but just as eating the flesh of a dead body is an extremely inhuman act, so is the backbiting. Both are prohibited. Otherwise also, speaking ill of someone in his absence is an unkind, mean and malicious act; it is not an act of valour and bravery.

This verse prohibits three social evils: unfounded suspicion, unjustifiable search for faults and backbiting. However, backbiting is most severely and harshly condemned. It is compared to eating the flesh of a dead Muslim, thus bringing out the gravity of its prohibition, unkindness and meanness. The wisdom of it lies in the fact that saying hurtful things to the face of someone is prohibited, but the man, being present, will be able to defend himself. Further, for fear of defense not everybody will have the courage to utter hurtful things to the face of someone, and usually it does not last long. It is unlike backbiting where there is no one to defend it, and thus the most mean person would pluck the courage to backbite the greatest of men. Because it is not defended, generally the ball keeps rolling, and more and more people get involved. Therefore, backbiting is prohibited most severely and harshly. It is necessary for the general body of Muslims to defend their brother, if possible, when people speak ill of him in his absence. If that is not possible, they should at least abstain from listening to it, because listening to it willfully and intentionally is like backbiting itself.

Some Issues Related to Backbiting

Sayyidnā Maimūn ᷻ says that once he saw in a dream that there is a dead body of a Negro. A caller addressed him and said: "Eat this." Sayyidnā Maimūn ᷻ says: "I said: 'O servant of God! Why should I eat this?'". The caller replied: "Because you have been backbiting a certain

person's Negro slave." Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ said: "By God, I did not do that." The caller replied: "Yes, you did: you listened to people backbiting him and remained silent as if you were in agreement with them." After this dream, Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ composed himself and he himself stopped backbiting and he did not allow anyone else in his presence to backbite.

In a narration of Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ relating to Holy Prophet's ﷺ experience of Mi'rāj , the Messenger of Allah said: "When I was taken up to the heaven, I passed by people who had fingernails of copper and were scratching their faces and breasts violently. I asked Jibra'il : 'Who are these people?' He replied: 'They are those people who were given to backbiting their brothers and who aspersed their honour.' [transmitted by al-Baghawī as cited in Mažharī]. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd and Jābir ﷺ report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

"Backbiting is worse than adultery. The noble Companions inquired: 'How so, Messenger of Allah?' He replied: 'A person may commit fornication, repent of it and his sin is forgiven. But the sin of backbiting is not forgiven unless the injured party forgives.'" [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd, as cited in Mažharī].

This *hadīth* indicates that backbiting is not only a violation of the Divine right, but also a violation of human right. Therefore, it is necessary to seek the forgiveness of the injured party. Some of the scholars express the view that backbiting does not become a human right unless the injured party comes to know about it. Therefore, seeking his pardon is not necessary [Quoted in Rūh-ul-Ma'ānī from Ḥasan, Al-Khayyāṭī, Ibn-uṣ-ṣabbāgh, An-Nawawī, Ibn-uṣ-ṣalāḥ, Az-Zarakshī, Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr from Ibn-ul-Mubārak]. This is quoted in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān and explained as follows: If the victim of backbiting is not aware that someone has spoken ill of him, it might not be necessary for the backbiter to beg pardon of the victim, but it is necessary that he falsifies himself before the person whom he addressed when backbiting, or at least confesses his guilt before him. If the victim is dead or has disappeared, the atonement is recorded in a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

ان من كُفَّارَةِ الْغَيْبَةِ أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرَ لِمَنْ اغْتَابَهُ تَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ

"The atonement of backbiting is to invoke forgiveness of Allah

for the victim in the following words: O Allah, forgive our sins and his sins". [Transmitted by Baihaqī and cited in Mažhari].

Ruling [1]

It is prohibited to backbite children, insane and non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state, because hurting them is prohibited. Hurting *ḥarbi* infidels who are the inhabitants of Dār-ul-Ḥarb [hostile country] is not prohibited. However, backbiting them, on account of wastage of time, is *makrūh*, and reprehensible.

Ruling [2]

Backbiting does not only connote speaking ill of a person behind his back, but it also connotes an action or pointed reference to him, as for instance if someone imitates the limp or uneven walking of a lame person to make fun of him, it is not permitted.

Ruling [3]

Some narrations show that the general prohibition of backbiting in the verse is subject to exceptions in special cases and specific circumstances. It is permitted if the need for backbiting is real and genuine from the Shari‘ah point of view. Examples are as follows:

- [a] Complaining against a tyrant before a person who can relieve him from the tyranny and injustice.
- [b] Complaining about the wife and children to the father and husband who can put them right.
- [c] Giving a full account of the case in order to obtain a *fatwa* (ruling of Shari‘ah)
- [d] Warning the Muslims of the mischief of a mischief-monger so that they may ward off the evil.
- [e] When someone consults another person in any matter, it is obligatory for him to apprise him of all aspects, including weaknesses, so that he is not deceived because of ignorance.
- [f] If a person commits sins openly and publishes his ungodly behaviour himself, it is not prohibited to make mention of his bad deeds. However, it is abominable and reprehensible to indulge in it on account of wastage of time [Bayān-ul-Qur‘ān with reference to

Rūh-ul-Ma‘āni].

But the necessary condition for invoking these exceptions is that speaking ill of someone is not with the intention of insulting or disgracing him, but only to fulfill a genuine need.

Verse 13

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُورًاٰ وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارِفُواٰ طَإِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْسِمُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify each other. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [13]

All of Mankind are the Children of 'Ādām and Hawwā عليهما السلام

In the preceding verses, six social evils in connection with human and Islamic rights were prohibited, and principles of good manners were laid down to be observed in social life. The current verse proceeds to set down the basis of an all-comprehensive and all-pervading principle of human equality. It has firmly laid the axe at the false and foolish notions of superiority, born of racial arrogance or national conceit. All men have been created from a single male [‘Ādām ﷺ] and a single female [Hawwā'] as human beings. Therefore, all people are the descendants of ‘Ādām and Hawwā' عليهما السلام and have been declared equal in the sight of Allah. No one is allowed to take pride nor to degrade others on the basis of pigment of his skin, the amount of wealth he possesses or by his rank or by his social status, descent or pedigree, but by his moral uprightness and the way he discharges his obligations to Allah and man. The entire human race is but one family. Division into nations, tribes and sub-tribes of all sizes, and races is meant only to give a better identification of one another.

Circumstances of Revelation

This verse was revealed on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah. When it was time for prayer, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Bilāl ﷺ to call the *adhān*. One of the pagan Quraish cynically remarked:

Thank God that my father died before this happened, and he did not have to see this bad day. Ḥārith Ibn Hishām remarked: Could Muḥammad not find anyone better than this black crow to sound the *adhān* in the Sacred Mosque! Abū Sufyān said: I do not wish to utter anything for fear that the master of the heavens will inform him. Thus Jibra’īl ﷺ came down and informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ about this conversation. The Holy Prophet ﷺ called them and asked them about it. They admitted. At this, the current verse was revealed.

Taqwā of Allah is the basis of Honour

This verse made it plain that human beings can earn honour on account of their faith and righteousness. The immediate application of the verse was to Sayyidnā Bilāl ﷺ, and therefore the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to those people: "You are empty (i.e. you have no moral leg to stand on.) Sayyidnā Bilāl ﷺ, on the other hand, is equipped (with high moral qualities); and he is better and more honourable than any of you." [Baghawī, as cited in Mažharī]. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar ﷺ reports that on the day when Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ performed *tawāf* (circumambulation of Ka’bah) in the state of riding on his she-camel, [so that all the people could see him]. Then having completed his *tawāf*, he delivered a sermon in which he said:

الحمد لله الذي اذهب عنكم عبادة الجاهلية وتكبرها. الناس رجالٌ برّ تقدّمُ كريماً
على الله وفاجر شقي هين على الله ثم تلا: يأيها الناس إنا خلقناكم (ترمذى وبغوى)

"O people! Allah has removed from you the pride of *Jahiliyyah* and its arrogance. People are of two types: a man who is righteous, fearful of Allah and he is honourable to Allah; or a man who is sinful, wretched, and he is disgraced and little to Allah [Timidhī and Baghawī]."

Then he recited the current verse.

Sayyidnā Ibn-‘Abbās ﷺ says: For people "honour" lies in wealth, whilst in the sight of Allah it lies in righteousness.

Analysis of Important Words in the Verse

The word شعوبًا Shu‘ub is the plural of Sha'b which refers to a large group of persons of the same origin, (like a nation). Then it consists of clans and tribes. The largest group in this arrangement is called *sa'b*, and the smallest is called *‘ashirah*. Abū Ruwāq says that the words Shu‘ub

and Sha'b refer to non-Arab nations whose lineage is not preserved, whilst *qabāil* refers to Arabs whose lineage is well-preserved. The word *asbāt* is used to refer to the children of Israel.

Lineal, National and Linguistic Division of Mankind: The Underlying Divine Wisdom is identification

The Qur'ān in this verse has made it clear that Allah has created all mankind from a single mother and a single father, and made them into a single brotherhood. But he has divided them into different tribes, nations, races, lineage and language-speakers/linguistic groups. The underlying Divine wisdom in such a division is mutual identification. For example, if there are two persons bearing the same name, they could be differentiated by family name. It can also show the near and remote relations. Their Shar'i rights can be fulfilled on the basis of near and distant lineage. It is incumbent to determine the near and remote agnate heirs when applying the law of succession or dividing the estate of a deceased. In short, reference to one's lineage for the purpose of identification is not deemed to be pride and conceit.

Verses 14 - 18

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ امَّا طَ قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلِكُنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا
يَدْخُلُ الْأَيَمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلْتَمِمُ مِنْ
أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ
أَمْنَوْا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَأُوا وَجَاهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيهِمْ ﴿١٦﴾ يَمْنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا طَقْ لَا تَمْنُوا عَلَى إِسْلَامِكُمْ
بَلِ اللَّهِ يَمْنُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَيْكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَدِيقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

The Bedouins say, "We have come to believe." Say, "You have not come to believe; instead you (should) say, 'We

have surrendered' and the belief has not entered your hearts so far. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not curtail (the reward of) any of your deeds in the least. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [14] Believers, in fact, are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then have no doubt, and struggle, with their riches and their lives, in the way of Allah. Those are the truthful. [15] Say, "Would you apprise Allah of your religion, while Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and Allah is All-Knowing about every thing?" [16] They oblige you that they have accepted Islam, (as if it was a favour shown to you). Say, "Do not oblige me for your accepting Islam. Rather, Allah makes you obliged for His having guided you to the Faith, if you are truthful. [17] Surely Allah knows the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and Allah keeps in sight whatever you do. [18]

Sequence of Verses in the Sūrah

In the preceding verses of the Sūrah it was stated that the basis of honour in the sight of Allah is righteousness which is an inner quality, and Allah alone knows it. It is improper for any man to claim self-sanctification. In the current set of verses, it is stated, on account of a particular incident, that the real basis of faith is the inner acceptance of the heart. Mere lip-service to faith does not count the person as a faithful believer. In the entire Sūrah, first the rights of the Prophet were set out and then the rules of how to respect and honour him. Next the individual and collective rights and rules of mannerism were set down to be applied in social life. Now at the conclusion of the Sūrah it is reiterated that in the Hereafter good deeds will be accepted and rewarded on the basis of faith, sincere belief of the heart and obedience to Allah and His Messenger.

Circumstances of Revelation

According to Imām Baghwī, this verse was revealed in connection with the tribe of Banu Asad. A few members of that tribe came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Madīnah during a severe drought. These people were not sincere believers. They had expressed their Islam merely to demand financial help from the Muslim *Sadaqāt* funds. As they were not believers in the real sense of the word, they were unaware of Islamic injunctions and manners. They spread filth and excrement on the streets of Madīnah. In the marketplaces they increased the prices of necessary items. First they made a false claim of faith in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ;

second they wanted to deceive him; and third they regarded their Islam as a favour to him. They said: "We embraced Islam without any conflict: we did not fight against you as did other tribes for a length of time and then they became Muslims; therefore you should value us." This was a sort of disrespect to the Messenger ﷺ, because they considered their Islam as a favour to him. Their sole purpose was to derive financial aid from the Muslim *Sadaqāt* funds, enrich themselves and eradicate their poverty. True and sincere faith is the most precious possession of a Muslim. By accepting Islam, he does not show a favour to anybody; on the contrary, it is a favour of Allah that he is guided to the Truth. On this occasion, the current set of verses was revealed in which their false claim is refuted and they have been taken to task for boasting of their so-called kindness and favour conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

وَلَكُنْ قُوْلُوا اسْلَمُنَا (...Say, 'We have surrendered'- 49:14). They had not achieved the reality of faith. Thus they were claiming falsely to be Muslims on the basis of their outward actions. The Qur'an first negates their false claim of faith: You cannot claim "*āmannā*" ['We have come to believe']; the most you can say is "*aslamnā*" ['We have surrendered'], because the literal meaning of Islam is to recite the *kalimah* of Islam, enter the fold of the religion and surrender. Obviously, being devoid of the true spirit, this kind of Islam is mere superficial, not real and total. As far as faith is concerned, it is related to the real belief by heart. Therefore, mere verbal claim or lip-profession is meaningless, if it is not supported by the heart.

Lexical and Technical Analysis of the Concepts "Islām" and "*īmān*"

The foregoing discussion clarifies that the term "Islam" in this verse bears the literal meaning of outward submission and not the technical sense. Therefore, the verse does not show the technical difference between the terms "Islām" and "*īmān*". The two terms, technically, connote different senses. "*īmān*", in the technical sense of Shari'ah, refers to the belief by heart and thus connotes a firm and unshakable belief in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger. "Islam", on the other hand, stands for complete surrender and obedience to Allah and His Messenger. However, "Islām" and "*īmān*" of a person need to complement each other. In Shari'ah, the belief of the heart must manifest itself by performing

deeds outwardly, the least degree of which is to proclaim the *kalimah* of Islām verbally. But the outward performance of deeds is not recognised by Shari‘ah unless the faith goes deep down into his heart. Otherwise it would be hypocrisy. Thus in the original and final analysis "Islam" and "Imān" are different concepts. "Imān" is the inner quality of the heart and manifests outwardly whilst "Islām" starts out in outward actions and culminates in the inner sincere affirmation of the heart. But in terms of their goal, they are mutually necessary and complementary in that "Imān" without "Islām" is not possible, nor is "Islam" possible without "Imān". Hence, it is not true to say that "Muslim" and "Mu'min" are antonyms and mutually contradictory concepts. In Shari‘ah, it is not possible for a person to be a "Muslim" but not a "Mu'min" or be a "Mu'min" but not a "Muslim". However, this is possible only lexically, as is the case of all hypocrites who used to be treated like Muslims, because of their outward obedience of Islamic injunctions, but their hearts were devoid of sincere faith, belief and affirmation. They were not believers. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt
Ends here