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**SayyidAbul Ala Maududi - Tafhim al-Qur'an - The Meaning of the Qur'an**

[http://s9.addthis.com/button1-share.gif](http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php)**24. Surah An Noor (The Light)**

**Name**

This Surah takes its name, An Nur, from verse 35.

**Period of Revelation**

The consensus of opinion is that it was sent down after the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq and this is confirmed by vv. 11-20 that deal with the incident of the "Slander", which occurred during that Campaign. But there is a difference of opinion as to whether this Campaign took place in 5 A. H. before the Battle of the Trench or in 6 A. H. after it. It is important to decide this issue in order to determine whether this Surah was sent down earlier or Surah Al- Ahzab(XXXIII), which is the only other Surah containing the Commandments about the observance of purdah by women. Surah Al-Ahzab was admittedly sent down on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench. Now if this Battle occurred earlier, it would mean that the initial instructions in connection with the Commandments of purdah were sent down in Surah Al-Ahzab and they were complemented later by the Commandments revealed in this Surah. On the other hand, if the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq occurred earlier, the chronological order of the Commandments would be reversed, and it would become difficult to understand the legal wisdom and implications of the Commandments of purdah.

According to Ibn Sa'd, the Campaign against Bani al Mustaliq took place in Shaban 5 A. H. and the Battle of the Trench in Zil- Qa'dah the same year. This opinion is based on some traditions from Hadarat Ayesha about the events connected with the "Slander" in which she refers to a dispute between HadratSa'd bin 'Ubadah and Sa'd bin Mu'az. HadratSa'd bin Mu'az, according to authentic traditions, died during the Campaign against BaniQuraizah, which took place immediately after the Battle of the Trench. It is, therefore, evident that he could not be present in 6 A. H. to take part in a dispute about the "Slander".

On the other hand, Muhammad bin Ishaq says that the Battle of the Trench took place in Shawwal 5 A. H. and the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq in Sha'ban 6 A. H. This opinion is supported by many authentic traditions from Hadrat Ayesha and others. According to these traditions, (1) the Commandments about purdah had been sent down in Surah Al-Ahzab before the incident of the "Slander", (2) the Holy Prophet had married Hadrat Zainab in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. after the Battle of the Trench, (3) Hamnah, sister of Hadrat Zainab, had taken a leading part in spreading the "Slander", just because Hadrat Ayesha was a rival of her sister. All this evidence supports the view of Muhammad bin Ishaq.

Now let us consider the two opinions a little more closely. The only argument in favor of the first opinion is the mention of the presence of HadratSa'd bin Mu'az in a dispute connected with the incident of the "Slander". But this argument is weakened by some other traditions from Hadrat Ayesha, in which she mentions HadratUsaid bin Hudair instead of HadratSa'd bin Mu'az in this dispute. It may, therefore, be assumed that there has been some confusion regarding the two names in reporting the traditions. Moreover, if we accept the first opinion, just because of the mention of the name of HadratSa'd bin Mu'az in some traditions, we encounter other difficulties that cannot be resolved in any way. For, in that case, we shall have to admit that the revelation of the Commandments of purdah and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab had taken place even earlier than the Battle of the Trench. But we learn from the Qur'an and many authentic traditions that both these events happened after that Battle and the Campaign against BaniQuraizah. That is why Ibn Hazm, Ibn Qayyim and some other eminent scholars have held the opinion of Muhammad bin Ishaq as correct, and we also hold it to be so. Thus, we conclude that Surah Al Ahzab was sent down earlier than Surah An-Nur, which was revealed in the latter half of 6 A. H. several months after Surah Al Ahzab.

**Historical Background**

Now let us review the circumstances existing at the time of the revelation of this surah. It should be kept in mind that the incident of the "Slander", which was the occasion of its revelation, was closely connected with the conflict between Islam and the disbelievers.

After the victory at Badr, the Islamic movement began to gain strength day by day; so much so that by the time of the Battle of the Trench, it had become so strong that the united forces of the enemy numbering about ten thousand failed to crush it and had to raise the siege of Al Madinah after one month. It meant this, and both the parties understood it well, that the war of aggression which the Disbelievers had been waging for several years, had come to an end. The Holy Prophet himself declared: "After this year, the Quraish will not be able to attack you; now you will take the offensive."

When the disbelievers realized that they could not defeat Islam on the battlefield, they chose the moral front to carry on the conflict. It cannot be said with certainty whether this Change of tactics was the outcome of deliberate consultations, or it was the inevitable result of the humiliating retreat in the Battle of the Trench, for which all the available forces of the enemy had been concentrated:They knew it well that the rise of Islam was nor due to the numerical strength of the Muslims nor to their superior arms and ammunition nor to their greater material resources; nay, the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds on all these fronts. They owed their success to their moral superiority. Their enemies realized that the pure and noble qualities of the Holy Prophet and his followers were capturing the hearts of the people, and were also binding them together into a highly disciplined community. As a result of this, they were defeating the *mushriks*and the Jews both on the peace and on the war front, because the latter lacked discipline and character.

Under the above mentioned circumstances, the wicked designs of the disbelievers led them to start a campaign of vilification against the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in order to destroy the bulwark of morale that was helping them to defeat their enemies. Therefore the strategy was to attain the assistance of the hypocrites to spread slanders against the Holy Prophet and his followers so that the *mushriks*and the Jews could exploit these to sow the seeds of discord among the Muslims and undermine their discipline.

The first opportunity for the use of the new strategy was afforded in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. when the Holy Prophet married Hadrat Zainab (daughter of Jahsh), who was the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah. The Holy Prophet had arranged this marriage in order to put an end to the custom of ignorance, which gave the same status to the adopted son that was the right only of the son from one's own loins. The hypocrites, however, considered it a golden opportunity to vilify the Holy Prophet from inside the community, and the Jews and the *mushriks*exploited it from outside to ruin his high reputation by this malicious slander. For this purpose fantastic stories were concocted and spread to this effect: "One day Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) happened to see the wife of his adopted son and fell in love with her; he maneuvered her divorce and married her." Though this was an absurd fiction it was spread with such skill, cunning and artfulness that it succeeded in its purpose; so much so that some Muslim traditionalists and commentators also have cited some parts of it in their writings, and the orientalists have exploited these fully to vilify the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, Hadrat Zainab was never a stranger to the Holy Prophet that he should see her by chance and fall in love with her at first sight. For she was his first cousin, being the daughter of his real paternal aunt, Umaimah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib. He had known her from her childhood to her youth. A year before this incident, he himself had persuaded her to marry Hadarat Zaid in order to demonstrate practically that the Quraish and the liberated slaves were equal as human being. As she never reconciled herself to her marriage with a liberated slave, they could not pull on together for long, which inevitably led to her divorce. The above mentioned facts were well known to all, yet the slanderers succeeded in their false propaganda with the result that even today there are people who exploit these things to defame Islam.

The second slander was made on the honor of Hadrat Ayesha, a wife of the Holy Prophet, in connection with an incident which occurred while he was returning from the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq. As this attack was even severer than the first one and was the main background of this Surah, we shall deal with it in greater detail.

Let us say a few words about Abdullah bin Ubayy, who played the part of a villain in this attack. He belonged to the clan of Khazraj and was one of the most important chiefs of Al-Madinah. The people had even intended to make him their king a little before the Holy Prophet's migration there, but the scheme had to be dropped because of the changed circumstances. Though he had embraced Islam, he remained at heart a hypocrite and his hypocrisy was so manifest that he was called the "Chief of the Hypocrites". He never lost any opportunity to slander Islam in order to take his revenge.

Now the main theme. When in Sha'ban 6 A. H. the Holy Prophet learned that the people of Bani al-Mustaliq were making preparations for a war against the Muslims and were trying to muster other clans also for this purpose, he fore- stalled and took the enemy by surprise. After capturing the people of the clan and their belongings, the Holy Prophet made a halt near Muraisi, a spring in their territory. One day a dispute concerning taking water from the spring started between a servant of Hadrat Umar and an ally of the clan of Khazraj, and developed into a quarrel between the Muhajirs(immigrants) and the Ansar(Muslims of Madinah), but was soon settled. This, however, did not suit the strategy of Abdullah bin Ubayy, who also had joined the expedition with a large number of hypocrites. So he began to incite the Ansar, saying, "You yourselves brought these people of the quraish from Makkah and made them partners in your wealth and property. And now they have become your rivals and want domination over you. If even now you withdraw your support from them, they shall be forced to leave your city." Then he swore and declared, "As soon as we reach back Al-Madinah, the respectable people will turn out the degraded people from the city."

When the Holy Prophet came to know of this, he ordered the people to set off immediately and march back to Al-Madinah. The forced march continued up to noon the next day without a halt on the way so that the people became exhausted and had no time for idle talk.

Though this wise judgment and quick action by the Holy Prophet averted the undesirable consequences of the mischief, Abdullah bin Ubayy got another opportunity for doing a far more serious and greater mischief, i. e. by engineering a "Slander" against Hadrat Ayesha, for that was a mischief which might well have involved the young Muslim Community in a civil war, if the Holy Prophet and his sincere and devoted followers had not shown wisdom, forbearance and marvelous discipline in dealing with it. In order to understand the events that led to the incident of the "Slander", we cite the story in Hadrat 'Ayesha's own words. She says :

"Whenever the Holy Prophet went out on a journey, he decided by lots as to which of his wives should accompany him. Accordingly, it was decided that I should accompany him during the expedition to Bani al Mustaliq. On the return journey, the Holy Prophet halted for the night at a place which was the last stage on the way back to Al- Madinah. It was still night, when they began to make preparations for the march. So I went outside the camp to ease myself. When I returned and came near my halting place, I noticed that my necklace had fallen down somewhere. I went back in search for it but in the meantime the caravan moved off and I was left behind all alone. The four carriers of the litter had placed it on my camel without noticing that it was empty. This happened because of my light weight due to lack of food in those days. I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down in the hope that when it would be found that I had been left behind, a search party would come back to pick me up. In the meantime I fell asleep. In the morning, when Safwan bin Mu'attalSulami passed that way, he saw me and recognized me for he had seen me several times before the Commandment about purdah had been sent down. No sooner did he see me than he stopped his camel and cried out spontaneously : "How sad! The wife of the Holy Prophet has been left here!" At this I woke up all of a sudden and covered my face with my sheet. Without uttering another word, he made his camel kneel by me and stood aside, while I climbed on to the camel back. He led the camel by the nose-string and we overtook the caravan at about noon, when it had just halted and nobody had yet noticed that I had been left behind. I learnt afterwards that this incident had been used to slander me and Abdullah bin Ubayy was foremost among the slanderers.(According to other traditions, when Hadrat Ayesha reached the camp on the camel, led by Safwan, and it was known that she had been left behind, Abdullah bin Ubayy cried out, 'By God, she could not have remained chaste. Look, there comes the wife of your Prophet openly on the camel led by the person with whom she passed the night.')

"When I reached Al-Madinah, I fell ill and stayed in bed for more than a month. Though I was quite unaware of it, the news of the "Slander" was spreading like a scandal in the city, and had also reached the Holy Prophet. Anyhow, I noticed that he did not seem as concerned about my illness he used to be. He would come but without addressing me directly, would inquire from others how I was and leave the house. Therefore it troubled my mind that something had gone wrong somewhere. So I took leave of him and went to my mother's house for better nursing.

"While I was there, one night I went out of the city to ease myself in the company of Mistah's mother, who was a first cousin of my mother. As she was walking along she stumbled over something and cried out spontaneously, 'May Mistah perish!' To this I retorted, 'What a good mother you are that you curse your own son -- the son who took part in the Battle of Badr.' She replied, 'My dear daughter, are you not aware of his scandal mongering?' Then she told me everything about the campaign of the "Slander".(Besides the hypocrites, some true Muslims also had been involved in this campaign, and among them who took leading part in it, were Mistah, Hassan bin Thabit, the famous poet of Islam, and Hamnah, daughter of Jahsh and sister of Hadrat Zainab). Hearing this horrible story, my blood curdled, and I immediately returned home, and passed the rest of the night in crying over it.

"During my absence the Holy Prophet took counsel with Ali and Usamah bin Zaid about this matter. Usamah said good words about me to this effect:'O Messenger of Allah, we have found nothing but good in your wife. All that is being spread about her is a lie and calumny.' As regards Ali, he said, 'O Messenger of Allah, there is no dearth of women; you may, if you like, marry an other wife. If, how- ever, you would like to investigate into the matter, you may send for her maid servant and inquire into it through her.' Accordingly, the maid servant was sent for and questioned. She replied, 'I declare on an oath by Allah, Who has sent you with the Truth, that I have never seen any evil thing in her, except that she falls asleep when I tell her to look after the kneaded dough in my absence and a goat comes and eats it.'

"On that same day the Holy Prophet addressed the people from the pulpit, saying:'O Muslims, who from among you will defend my honor against the attacker of the person who has transgressed all bounds in doing harm to me by slandering my wife. By God, I have made a thorough inquiry and found nothing wrong with her nor with the man, whose name has been linked with the "Slander". At this Usaid bin Hudair (or Sa'd bin Mauz) according to other traditions) stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if that person belongs to our clan, we will kill him by ourselves, but if he belongs to the Khazraj clan, we will kill him if you order us to do so.' Hearing this Sa'd bin 'Ubadah, chief of the Khazraj clan, stood up and said, 'You lie you can never kill him. You are saying this just because the person belongs to our clan of Khazraj. Had he belonged to your clan, you would never have said so.' HadratUsaid retorted, 'You are a hypocrite: that is why you are defending a hypocrite.' At this, there was a general turmoil in the mosque, which would have developed into a riot, even though the Holy Prophet was present there the whole time. But he cooled down their anger and came down from the pulpit."

The remaining details of the incident will be cited along with our commentary on the Text, which honorably absolved HadratAishah from the blame. But here we would only want to point out the enormity of the mischief that was engineered by Abdullah bin Ubayy: (1) It implied an attack on the honor of the Holy Prophet and Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq.(2) He meant to undermine the high moral superiority which was the greatest asset of the Islamic Movement (3) He intended to ignite civil war between the Muhajirs and the Ansar, and between Aus and Khazraj, the two clans of the Ansar.

**Theme and Topics**

This Surah and vv. 28-73 of Surah Al-Ahzab(of which this is the sequel) were sent down to strengthen the moral front, which at that time was the main target of the attack, vv. 28-73 of Al-Ahzab were sent down concerning the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab, and on the occasion of the second attack (the "Slander" about HadratAishah), Surah An-Nur was sent down to repair the cracks that had appeared in the unity of the Muslim Community. If we keep this in view during the study of the two Surahs, we shall understand the wisdom that underlies the Commandments about purdah. Allah sent the following instructions to strengthen and safeguard the moral front, and to counteract the storm of propaganda that was raised on the occasion of the marriage of Hazrat Zainab:

1. The wives of the Holy Prophet were enjoined to remain within their private quarters, to avoid display of adornments and to be cautious in their talk with other persons (vv. 32, 33).
2. The other Muslims were forbidden to enter the private rooms of the Holy Prophet and instructed to ask whatever they wanted from behind the curtain.(v. 53).
3. A line of demarcation was drawn between the *mahram*and the non-*mahram*relatives. Only the former were allowed to enter the private rooms of those wives of the Holy Prophet with whom they were so closely related as to prohibit marriage with them.(v. 55).
4. The Muslims were told that the wives of the Prophet were prohibited for them just like their own real mothers; therefore every Muslim should regard them with the purest of intentions.(vv. 53, 54).
5. The Muslims were warned that they would invite the curse and scourge of Allah if they offended the Holy Prophet. Likewise it was a heinous sin to attack the honor of or slander any Muslim man or woman.(vv. 57, 58).
6. All the Muslim women were enjoined to cover their faces with their sheets if and when they had to go out of their houses.(v. 59).

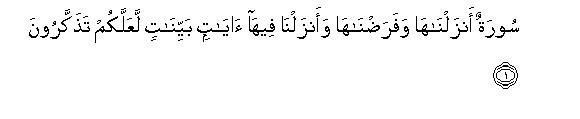
On the occasion of the second attack, this Surah was sent down to keep pure and strengthen the moral fiber of the Muslim society, which had been shaken by the enormity of the slander. We give below a summary of the Commandments and instructions in their chronological order so that one may understand how the Qur'an makes use of the psychological occasion to reform the Community by the adoption of legal, moral and social measures.

1. Fornication which had already been declared to be a social crime (IV: 15,16) was now made a criminal offense and was to be punished with a hundred lashes.
2. It was enjoined to boycott the adulterous men and women and the Muslims were forbidden to have any marriage relations with them.
3. The one, who accused the other of adultery but failed to produce four witnesses, was to be punished with eighty lashes.
4. The Law of *Li'an*was prescribed to decide the charge of adultery against his own fife by a husband.
5. The Muslims were enjoined to learn a lesson from the incident of the "Slander" about HadratAishah, as if to say, "You should be very cautious in regard to charges of adultery against the people of good reputation, and should not spread these; nay, you should refute and suppress them immediately." In this connection, a general principle was enunciated that the proper spouse for a pure man is a pure woman, for he cannot pull on with a wicked woman for long, and the same is the case with a pure woman, as if to say, "When you knew that the Holy Prophet was a pure man, nay, the purest of all human beings, how could you believe that he had experienced happiness with a wicked woman and exalted her as the most beloved of his wives? For it was obvious that an adulterous woman could not have been able to deceive, with her affected behavior, a pure man like the Holy Prophet. You ought also to have considered the fact that the accuser was a mean person while the accused was a pure woman. This should have been enough to convince you that the accusation was not worth your consideration; nay, it was not even conceivable.
6. Those who spread news and evil rumors and propagate wickedness in the Muslim Community, deserve punishment and not encouragement.
7. A general principle was laid down that relations in the Muslim Community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion: everyone should be treated as innocent unless he is proved to be guilty and *vice versa*.
8. The people were forbidden to enter the houses of others unceremoniously and were instructed to take permission for this.
9. Both men and women were instructed to lower their gaze and forbidden to cast glances or make eyes at each other.
10. Women were enjoined to cover their heads and breasts even inside their houses.
11. Women were forbidden to appear with make-up before other men except their servants or such relatives with whom their marriage is prohibited.
12. They were enjoined to hide their make-ups when they went out of their houses, and even forbidden to put on jingling ornaments, while they moved out of their houses.
13. Marriage was encouraged and enjoined even for slaves and slave girls, for unmarried people help spread indecency.
14. The institution of slavery was discouraged and the owners and other people were enjoined to give financial help to the slaves to earn their freedom under the law of *Mukatabat*.
15. Prostitution by slave girls was forbidden in the first instance, for prostitution in Arabia was confined to this class alone. This in fact implied the legal prohibition of prostitution.
16. Sanctity of privacy in home life was enjoined even for servants and under age children including one's own. They were enjoined not to enter the private rooms of any man or woman without permission; especially in the morning, at noon and at night.
17. Old women were given the concession that they could set aside their head covers within their houses but should refrain from display of adornments. Even they were told that it was better for them to keep themselves covered with head wrappers.
18. The blind, lame, crippled and sick persons were allowed to take any article of food from the houses of other people without permission, for it was not to be treated like theft and cheating, which are cognizable offenses.
19. On the other hand, the Muslims were encouraged to develop mutual relationships by taking their meals together, and the nearest relatives and intimate friends were allowed to take their meals in each other's house without any formal invitation. This was to produce mutual affection and sincere relationships between them to counteract any future mischief. Side by side with these instructions, clear signs of the Believers and the hypocrites were stated to enable every Muslim to discriminate between the two. At the same time the Community was bound together by adopting disciplinary measures in order to make it stronger and firmer than it was at the time so as to discourage the enemies from creating mischief in it.

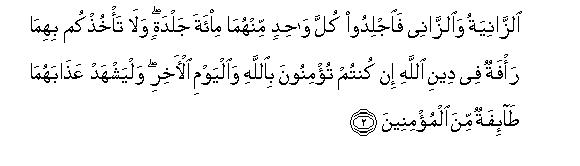
Above all, the most conspicuous thing about this discourse is that it is free from the bitterness which inevitably follows such shameful and absurd attacks. Instead of showing any wrath at this provocation, the discourse prescribes some laws and regulations and enjoins reformative commandments and issues wise instructions that were required at the time for the education and training of the Community. Incidentally, this teaches us how to deal with such provocative mischiefs coolly, wisely and generously. At the same time, it is a clear proof that this is not the word of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) but of a Being Who is observing all human conditions and affairs from the highest level, and guiding mankind without any personal prejudices, feelings and leanings. Had this been the word of the Holy Prophet; there would have been at least some tinge of natural bitterness in spite of his great generosity and forbearance, for it is but human that a noble man naturally become enraged when his own honor is attacked in this mean manner.



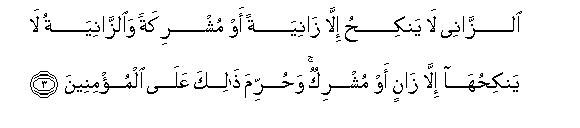
In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.



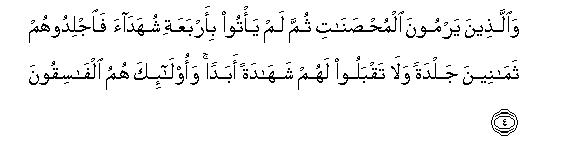
[1] This is a Surah which We have sent down and We have made it mandatory, and We have sent down clear Commandments in it[1](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote1sym) so that you may learn lessons.

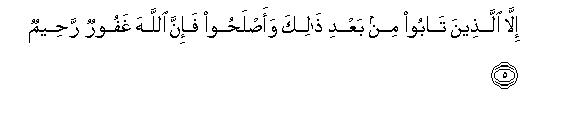


[2] The woman and the man guilty of fornication, flog each one of them with a hundred stripes[2](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote2sym) and let not any pity for them restrain you in regard to a matter prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day,[3](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote3sym) and let, some of the believers witness the punishment inflicted on them.[4](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote4sym)

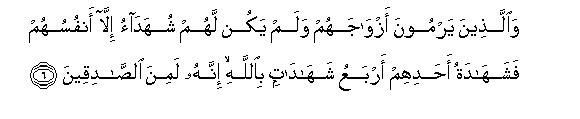


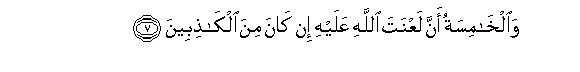
[3] A man guilty of adultery (or fornication) shall not marry any but the woman guilty of the same or a mushrik woman, and none shall marry a woman guilty of adultery (or fornication) but the man guilty of the same or a mushrik man: such marriages are forbidden to true believers.[5](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote5sym)



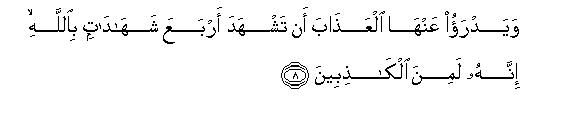


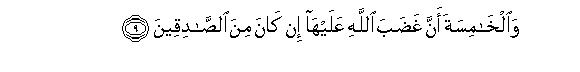
[4-5] As for those persons who charge chaste women with false accusations but do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and never accept their evidence afterwards, for they themselves are transgressors, except those who repent and reform themselves; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.[6](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote6sym)

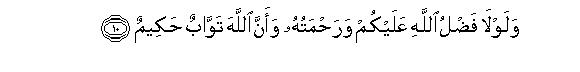




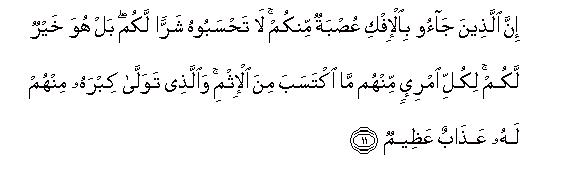
[6-7] As for those who accuse their own wives but have no witness except themselves, the evidence of one of them is that he shall swear four times by Allah and declare that he is true (in his charge). Then the fifth time he shall declare that Allah's curse be upon him if he be false (in his charge).

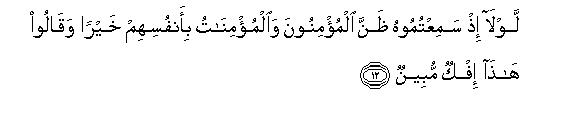


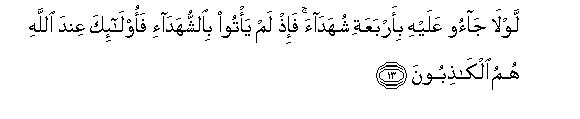


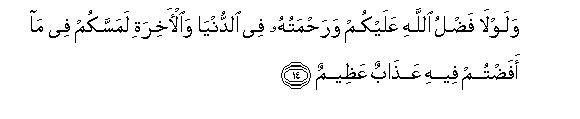


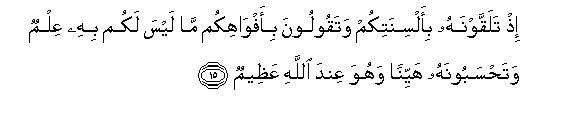
[8-10] (As for the woman), it shall avert the punishment from her if she swears four times by Allah that the man is false (in his charge) and the fifth time she invokes Allah's wrath upon herself, if he be true (in his charge).[7](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote7sym) If Allah had not shown you His grace and mercy and if Allah had not been most Forgiving and All-Wise, (you would have been in a great fix because of accusing your wives).



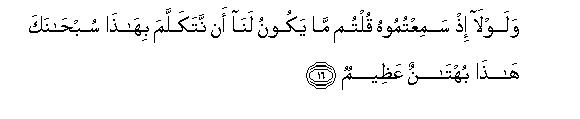


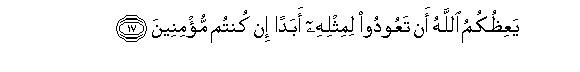


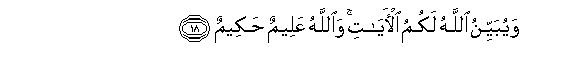




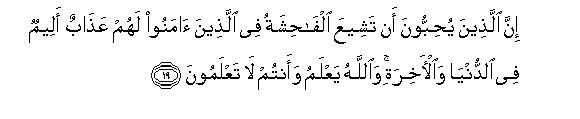
[11-15] Those who have invented the slander,[8](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote8sym) are some of your own people.[9](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote9sym) You should not, however, regard this matter as evil for it has good in it for you.[10](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote10sym) Whoso took any part in this, he earned his share of the sin accordingly, and the one, who had the greatest share of responsibility in it,[11](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote11sym) shall have a terrible punishment. When you heard of it, why didn't the Believing men and the Believing women have a good opinion of themselves,[12](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote12sym) and why did they not say, "This is a manifest slander?"[13](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote13sym) Why did the slanderers not bring four witnesses (to prove their charge)? Now that they have not brought witnesses, they themselves are liars in the sight of Allah.[14](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote14sym) Were it not for Allah's grace and mercy towards you in this world and in the Hereafter, a painful scourge would have visited you because of the things in which you were involved. (Just think how erroneous you were,) when you passed this lie on from one tongue to the other and uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge. You took it as a trifling matter whereas it was a grave offense in the sight of Allah.

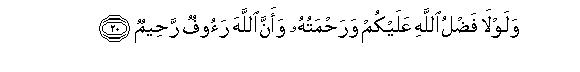




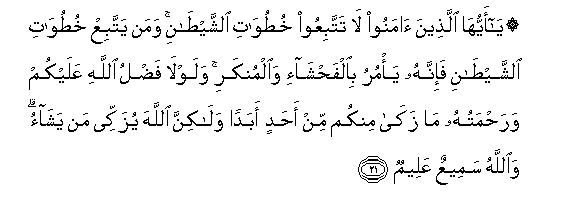


[16-18] Why did you not, as soon as you heard of it, say, "It is not proper for us to utter such a thing ? Glory be to Allah! This is a great slander." Allah admonishes you that in future you should never repeat a thing like this, if you are true Believers. Allah makes His Revelations clear to you, and He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[15](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote15sym)

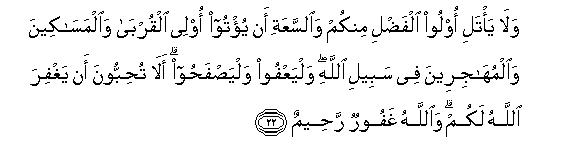




[19-20] As for those, who like that indecency should spread among the Believers, they deserve a painful punishment in this world and in the Hereafter,[16](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote16sym) for Allah knows and you do not know (its consequences).[17](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote17sym) If Allah had not shown His grace and mercy to you, (this scandal would have produced very evil results): Allah is indeed very Kind and Merciful.



[21] O Believers, do not follow in Satan's footsteps, for he will incite to indecency and wickedness any who will follow him. If Allah had not shown His Brace and mercy to you, none of you would have been able to cleanse yourself,[18](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote18sym) for it is Allah alone Who cleanses whom He wills, and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[19](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote19sym)



[22] Those among you, who are bountiful and persons of means, should not swear on oath that they would withhold their help from their relatives, the indigent and those who have left their homes for the cause of Allah: they should forgive and forbear. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.[20](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote20sym)



[23-25] Those who charge with slander those Believing women, who are chaste but simple souls,[21](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote21sym) are accursed in this world and in the Hereafter: there is a great punishment for them. They should not forget the Day when their own tongues and their own hands and test will bear testimony in regard to their misdeeds.[21a](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote22sym) On that Day Allah will give them the full recompense they deserve, and they will realize that Allah is the very Truth, Who makes the Truth manifest.

[26] Impure women are for impure men and impure men for impure women, and pure women are for pure men and pure men for pure women. They are free from those scandals which the slanderers utter.[22](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote23sym) There is forgiveness for them and honorable provision.

[27-29] O Believers,[23](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote24sym) do not enter other houses than your own until you have the approval of the inmates[24](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote25sym) and have wished them peace; this is the best way for you: it is expected that you will observe it.[25](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote26sym) Then, if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter until you have been given permission,[26](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote27sym) and if you are told to go back, you should go back. This is a purer way for you;[27](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote28sym) and Allah has full knowledge of what you do. There is, however, no harm if you enter houses which are not dwelling places, but contain something useful for you;[28](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote29sym) Allah knows what you disclose and what you conceal.

[30] And O Prophet, enjoin the Believing men to restrain their gaze[29](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote30sym) and guard their private parts.[30](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote31sym) This is a more righteous way for them: Allah has knowledge of what they do.

[31] O Prophet, enjoin the Believing men to restrain their gaze[31](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote32sym) and guard their private[32](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote33sym) parts.[33](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote34sym) and not to display their adornment[34](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote35sym) except that which is displayed of itself,[35](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote36sym) and to draw their veils over their bosoms[36](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote37sym) and not to display their adornment except before their husbands,[37](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote38sym) their fathers, the fathers of their husbands,[38](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote39sym) their sons and the sons of their husbands[39](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote40sym) (from other wives), their brothers,[40](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote41sym) their brothers' sons,[41](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote42sym) their sisters' sons,[42](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote43sym) their female associates[43](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote44sym) and those in their possession[44](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote45sym) and male attendants incapable of sex desire[45](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote46sym) and those boys who have not yet attained knowledge of sex matters concerning women;[46](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote47sym) also forbid them to stamp their feet on the ground lest their hidden ornaments should be displayed.[47](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote48sym) O Believers, turn all together towards Allah:[48](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote49sym) it is expected that you will attain true success.[49](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote50sym)

[32-33] Arrange marriages between the single men and women among you[50](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote51sym) and between your slave men and slave women, who are righteous,[51](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote52sym)[52](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote53sym) if they be indigent, Allah will provide means for them out of His bounty:[53](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote54sym) Allah has boundless resources and He is All Knowing. And those, who cannot find a match, should observe continence till Allah provides them with means out of His bounty[54](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote55sym) And if those who are in your possession, ask for a deed of emancipation, execute the deed of emancipation[55](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote56sym) with them,[56](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote57sym) provided that you find some good in them;[57](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote58sym) and give them something out of the means Allah has given you.[58](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote59sym) And do not force your slave-girls into prostitution for your own worldly gains when they themselves want to keep chaste;[59](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote60sym) and if anyone forces them into it, after such a compulsion Allah will be forgiving and merciful for them.

[34] We have sent down to you Revelations giving clear guidance and cited examples of the peoples who went before you to serve as warning and We have imparted admonitions for the God-fearing.[60](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote61sym)

[35-38] Allah[61](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote62sym) is the light of the heavens and the earth:[62](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote63sym) His light (in the universe) may be likened (to the light of) a lamp in a niche: the lamp is in a glass shade: the glass shade is like a glittering star and lamp is lit with the olive oil of a blessed tree[63](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote64sym) which is neither eastern nor western:[64](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote65sym) its oil is (so fine) as if it were going to shine forth by itself though no fire touched it (as though all the means of increasing) light upon light (were provided[65](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote66sym) ); Allah guides to His light whomever He wills.[66](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote67sym) He cites parables to make the Message clear to the people; He has perfect knowledge of everything.[67](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote68sym) (Those who obtain guidance to His light are found) in the houses which He has enjoined to raise up and to mention His name therein.[68](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote69sym) In them such people glorify Him morning and evening as are not diverted by trade and merchandise from remembering Him and from establishing Salat and paying Zakat, for they fear the Day when the hearts will be overturned and the eyes will become petrified. (And they behave like this) so that Allah may reward them for their excellent deeds and, in addition to it, show His favor to them out of His bounty: Allah provides without stint[69](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote70sym) for anyone He pleases.

[39-40] (On the other hand,) the deeds of those who disbelieved,[70](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote71sym) maybe likened to a mirage in a waterless desert, which the thirsty one took for water; but when he reached there he found nothing to drink; nay, he found there Allah Who settled his full account, and Allah is very swift at reckoning.[71](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote72sym) Or (their efforts may be likened to those of a man trying to swim in) a deep dark ocean, covered with billows, one over the other, and above it a cloud: darkness upon darkness: so much so that if he stretches out his hand, he cannot see[72](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote73sym) it. There is no light for the one whom Allah does not give light.[73](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote74sym)

[41-42] Do[74](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote75sym) you not observe that all those who are in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with outspread wings, glorify Allah ? Each one knows the mode of its prayer and glorification, and Allah has full knowledge of all they do. The kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone, and all shall have to return to Him.

[43-44] Do you not observe that Allah makes the cloud move gently then joins its pieces together: then gathers it into a mass of thick cloud: then you see that rain-drops fall down from its midst: and He sends down hail out of the high up mountains in the heaven:[75](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote76sym) then He smites with it whom He wills and turns it away from whom He pleases: then a flash of lightning from it dazzles the eyes. He alternates the day and the night: there is indeed a lesson in it for those who have observing eyes.

[45] And Allah created every creature from a sort of water: of them some one crawls upon its belly: another walks on two legs and still another on four; Allah creates whatever He wills for He has power over everything.

[46] We have sent down Revelations that make the reality quite plain; however, Allah guides to the straight path whomsoever He pleases.

[47-50] These people say "We have believed in Allah and the Messenger and we have submitted"; but soon after this, some of them turn away (from obedience): such people are not true Believers.[76](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote77sym) When they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them,[77](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote78sym) a party of them turns away.[78](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote79sym) However, if the truth be on their side, they come towards the Messenger in all obedience.[79](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote80sym) Are their hearts afflicted with the disease (of hypocrisy)? Or, are they in doubt? Or, do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will be unjust to them? In fact, they themselves are unjust.[80](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote81sym)

[51-52] As regards the Believers, when they are called towards Allah and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them, they say, "We have heard and obeyed"; such are the people who attain true success, and only those attain true success who obey Allah and His Messenger and fear Allah and refrain from His disobedience.

[53-54] They (the hypocrites) solemnly swear by Allah and say, "If you order us, we will leave our homes." Say to them, "Do not swear oaths for your “obedience” is well known;[81](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote82sym) Allah is fully aware of what you are doing."[82](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote83sym) Say, "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, you should note it well that the Messenger is responsible for the duty entrusted to him and you are responsible for the duty entrusted to you. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided, for the responsibility of the Messenger is only to convey the Message clearly to you.

[55-57] Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will make them successors in the land just as He made those who passed away before them, and that He will establish their religion, which He has approved for them, on strong foundations and will change their (present) state of fear into peace and security. Let them worship Me and associate none with Me;[83](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote84sym) and the one who disbelieves after this,"[84](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote85sym) shall be of those who are perverse transgressors. Therefore, establish Salat, pay the Zakat dues and obey the Messenger; it is expected that you will be shown mercy. Do not think about those who have disbelieved that they will be able to frustrate Allah in the land; their abode is Hell and it is a very evil abode.

[58-59] O Believers,[85](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote86sym) your slaves[86](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote87sym) and those of your children, who have not yet become sex conscious,[87](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote88sym) must ask your permission before coming in to see you on three occasions: before the Fajr Prayer and at noon when you put off your clothes and after the `Isha' Prayer. These are your three times of privacy.[88](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote89sym) There is no sin for you or for them[89](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote90sym) if they come without permission at other times than these, for you have to visit one another over and over again.[90](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote91sym) In this way Allah makes His Commandments clear to you for He is All-Knowing, All-Wise. And when your children have grown sex conscious,[91](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote92sym) they should receive your permission for this just as their elders get permission. In this way Allah makes His Revelations plain to you for He is All-Knowing, All Wise.

[60] There is no sin for such elderly women as are past the age of marriage,[92](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote93sym) if they lay aside their outer garments[93](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote94sym) provided that they do not mean to display their adornment.[94](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote95sym) Nevertheless, if they behave modestly, it would be better for them: for Allah hears everything and knows everything.

[61] There is no harm if a blind or a lame or a sick person (takes a meal at another's house): nor is there any harm for yourselves if you take meals at your own houses or at the houses of your fathers and grandfathers or at the houses of your mothers and grandmothers or at your brothers' houses or at your sisters' houses or at the houses of your paternal uncles or at the houses of your paternal aunts or at the houses of your maternal uncles or at the houses of your maternal aunts or from the houses whose keys are in your possession or at the houses of your friends.[95](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote96sym) There is no harm if you take your meals together or separately;[96](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote97sym) however, when you enter the houses, you should send greetings of peace on your people, for the prayer of greetings prescribed by Allah is blessed and pure. Thus Allah makes His Revelation's clear to you. It is expected that you will use your common sense to grasp these.

[62] True Believers[97](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote98sym) are those who sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger and who do not leave him without permission when they are with the Messenger for some common good;[98](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote99sym) only those who ask your permission sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, when they ask your permission for a private business,[99](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote100sym) you may give permission to whomever you like,[100](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote101sym) and ask Allah's forgiveness for such people.[101](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote102sym) Allah is indeed Forgiving and Merciful.

[63-64] O Believers, do not consider the summoning by the Messenger like the summoning among you by one another.[102](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote103sym) Allah knows well those of you who steal away, concealing themselves behind others.[103](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote104sym) Let those who disobey the order of the Messenger beware lest they should be involved in some affliction,[104](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote105sym) or are visited by a woeful scourge. Beware! whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. He knows whatever you are doing. On the Day you shall return to Him, He will let you know what you have . done: He has full knowledge of everything.

[1](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote1anc)In all these sentences the emphasis is on "We", which implies that it is Allah Who has revealed this and none else; therefore, "You should not treat these instructions lightly like the word of an ordinary preacher. You should note it well that these have been sent down by One Who controls your lives and destinies and from Whom you can never escape even after your death.

The second sentence emphasizes that the instructions sent down in this Surah are not of the nature of advice which you may accept or reject at will. These are mandatory Commandments which must be obeyed. If you are a believer and a true Muslim you are obliged to act upon them.

The third sentence states that the instructions given in this Surah are free front any ambiguity and are couched in clear and plain words. Therefore, you cannot put up the excuse that you could not act upon them as you did not understand them.

This is the 'Preamble' of this blessed Message after which the specific Commandments follow. The cone of the preamble itself indicates the great importance which Allah has attached to the Commandments contained in Surah An-Nur. The preamble of no other Surah containing Commandments is so forceful as this.

[2](http://englishtafsir.com/Quran/24/index.html" \l "sdfootnote2anc)There are various legal, moral and historical aspects of this problem which need explanation, for if these are not clarified in detail, the modern man will find it difficult to understand the Divine Law concerning it. Accordingly, we shall discuss the various aspects of the problem below:

(1) The common meaning of zinc which everyone knows is: "Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without the legal relationship of husband and wife existing between them." There has been complete unanimity of view among all the social systems from the earliest times to this day that this act is morally wicked, religiously sinful and socially evil and objectionable, and there has been no dissenting voice except from those stray individuals who have subordinated their moral sense to their lust, or who in their misguided notions try to be "original" and "philosophical" in their approach. The universal unanimity of view in this respect is due to the fact that man by nature abhors zinc. In fact, the future of human race and civilization depends on this that the relationship between the husband and wife should be built upon the basis of an enduring and everlasting bond of fidelity, which should not only be fully recognized in the social life but should also be guaranteed by the existing social structure. Without this the human race cannot survive. This is because the human child requires years of tender care and training for as survival and development and a woman alone cannot bear the burden without the cooperation of the man who became the cause of the birth of the child. Similarly human civilization itself is the product of the corporate life of a man and a woman, their setting up a home, bringing up a family, and establishing mutual relationships and inter-connections between families. If men and women were to lose sight of this essential fact, that is, the establishment of a home and raising a family, and were to meet freely just for pleasure and lust, the entire structure of human society would crumble. In fact, the very foundations on which the structure of human civilization and culture has been built will topple down and the whole basis of the concept of a social life will disappear. It is for these reasons that free mixing of men and women, without any recognized and stable bonds of fidelity, is abhorrent to human nature, and it is for this reason that in every age zina has been considered as a moral evil and, in religious terminology, a grave sin. Accordingly, the social systems in every age recognized and adopted the institution of marriage and also adopted preventive measures against adultery or fornication. The forms of the measures adopted in this direction have, however, differed under different social, cultural and religious systems. This difference has been the result of the realization of the disastrous effects of adultery (or fornication) in varying degrees: some societies have considered it to be more heinous than others, and some have conceived it clearly and some others not so clearly and confused it with other problems.

(2) Though adultery (or fornication) has always been accepted as an evil, opinion has differed as to whether it is legally a punishable offense or not, and this is where Islam differs from other religions and systems of law. Social systems which have been akin to human nature have always considered illicit intercourse between man and woman a serious crime and prescribed severe punishments for it. But with the deterioration in moral standards, this morality grew weaker and weaker and the attitude towards this crime became more and more tolerant.

The first common lapse in this connection was caused by the invidious distinction between fornication and adultery. The former as such was taken as an ordinary offense while the latter only was held as a punishable crime.

Zina, as defined under various laws, means "sexual intercourse between a man (whether married or bachelor) and a woman, who is not the wife of anybody." This definition takes into account the position of the woman rather than of the man. If a woman is without a husband, the illicit intercourse with her amounts to fornication irrespective of the fact whether the man is married or not. The ancient laws of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and India provided very light punishments for it, and the same were adopted by the Greeks and the Romans,which finally influenced the Jewish attitude. According to the Bible, only monetary compensation is payable for such an offense. The Commandment on the subject is as follows:

"And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." (Exod. 22: 16,17)

The same Commandment is repeated in different words in Deuteronorny, which is as below:

"If a man finds a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver (about fifty-five rupees), and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her." (Deut. 22: 28, 29).

Under the Jewish law, if a priest's daughter acts immorally, she is to be sentenced to burning and the man with whom she was alleged to have acted immorally was to suffer strangulation. (Everyman's Talmud, pp. 319, 320).

To judge the extent to which this conception resembles that of the Hindus, it will be worthwhile to compare it with the laws of Manu. According to him, "Anybody who commits illicit intercourse with an unmarried girl. of his own caste with her consent does not deserve any punishment. If the father of the girl is willing, the man should compensate him and marry the girl. But if the girl happens to belong to a higher caste and the man belongs to a lower caste, the girl should be turned out from her parents' house and the limbs of the man should be cut off." (Adhiai 8. Ashlok 365, 366). This punishment may be changed into burning him alive, if the girl happens to be a Brahman. (Ashlok 377).

Under all these laws, illicit intercourse with a married woman only was the real and major crime. The deciding factor for treating it as a crime was not the illicit relationship between the man and the woman but the likelihood of an awkward situation under which a child might have to be reared up by a man (the real husband of the woman