

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Al-Mumtaḥana*, 60.

This is the fourth of the ten Madinah Surās, each dealing with a special point in the life of the Ummat.

Here the point is: what social relations are possible with the Unbelievers? A distinction is made between those who persecute you for your Faith and want to destroy you and your Faith, and those who have shown no such rancour. The question of women and cross-marriages is equitably dealt with.

The date is after the Pagans had broken the treaty of Ḥudaibya, for which see Introduction to S. xlviii,—say about A.H. 8, not long before the conquest of Makkah.

Summary.—The enemies of your Faith, who would exterminate you and your Faith, are not fit objects of your love: follow Abraham's example: but with those Unbelievers who show no rancour, you should deal with kindness and justice: marriages between Believers and Unbelievers. (lx. 1-13).

Al-Mumtahana, or the Woman to be
Examined. (lx. 10)

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. O ye who believe!

Take not My enemies

And yours as friends

(Or protectors),—offering them⁵⁴⁰⁹

(Your) love, even though

They have rejected the Truth

That has come to you,

And have (on the contrary)

Driven out the Messenger

And yourselves (from your homes),

(Simply) because ye believe

In Allah your Lord!⁵⁴¹⁰

If ye have come out

To strive in My Way

And to seek My Good Pleasure,

Showing friendship unto them

In secret: for I know

Full well all that ye

Conceal and all that ye

Reveal. And any of you

That does this has strayed

From the Straight Path.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ
تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ
مِنَ الْحَقِّ يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ
رَبِّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ حَرَجْتُمْ جِهَدًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِي تُسِرُّونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَخْفَيْتُمْ
وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ
السَّبِيلِ ١

5409. The immediate occasion for this was a secret letter sent by one Hātib, a Muhājir, from Madinah, to the Pagans at Makkah, in most friendly terms, seeking for their protection on behalf of his children and relatives left behind in Makkah. The letter was intercepted, and he confessed the truth. He was forgiven as he told the truth and his motive did not appear to be heinous, but this instruction was given for future guidance. This was shortly before the conquest of Makkah, but the principle is of universal application. You cannot be on terms of secret intimacy with the enemies of your Faith and people, who are persecuting your Faith and seeking to destroy your Faith and you. You may not do so even for the sake of your relatives as it compromises the life and existence of your whole community.

5410. Such was the position of the Muslim community in Madinah after the Hijrat and before the conquest of Makkah.

2. If they overcome you⁵⁴¹¹

They would behave to you
As enemies, and stretch forth
Their hands and their tongues
Against you for evil;
And they desire that ye
Should reject the Truth.

3. Of no profit to you⁵⁴¹²

Will be your relatives
And your children
On the Day of Judgment:
He will judge between you:
For Allah sees well
All that ye do.

4. There is for you

An excellent example (to follow)
In Abraham and those with him,⁵⁴¹³
When they said
To their people:
"We are clear of you
And of whatever ye worship
Besides Allah: we have rejected

إِنْ يَشْفِقُوا كَيْفَ يَكُونُوا أَعْدَاءُ وَبَسْطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ
أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا أَنْ تَكْفُرُوا ﴿٢﴾

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ يَقْضَىٰ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣﴾

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ
إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ كُفْرًا بِكُمْ وَبِدِينِنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلْعَدُوَّةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ
أَبَدًا حَتَّىٰ تَوْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ

5411. Besides the question of your fidelity to your own people, even your own selfish interests require you to beware of secret intrigues with enemies. They will welcome you as cat's paw. But what will happen when they have used you and got the better of you and your people! Then they will show you their hand. And a heavy hand it will be! Not only will they injure you with their hands but with their tongues! The only words they will use for you will be "Traitors to their own"! If they intrigue with you now, it is to prevent you from the Path of Truth and righteousness and win you over to their evil ways.

5412. The plea of children and relatives (see n. 5409 above) will be no excuse for treachery when the Day of Judgment comes. Your children and family will not save you. The Judgment will be in the hands of Allah, and He has full knowledge of all your overt and hidden acts and motives.

5413. See ix. 114. Abraham was tender-hearted, and loyal to his father and his people. He warned them against idolatry and sin, and prayed for his father, but when his father and his people became open enemies of Allah, Abraham entirely dissociated himself from them, and left his home, his father, his people, and his country. Those with him were his believing wife and nephew Lût and any other Believers that went into exile with him.

You, and there has arisen,
Between us and you, enmity⁵⁴¹⁴

And hatred for ever,—unless

Ye believe in Allah

And Him alone”:

But not when Abraham

Said to his father:

“I will pray for forgiveness⁵⁴¹⁵

For thee, though I have

No power (to get) aught

On thy behalf from Allah.”

(They prayed): “Our Lord!⁵⁴¹⁶

In Thee do we trust,

And to Thee do we turn

In repentance: to Thee

Is (our) final Return.

5. “Our Lord! Make us not
A (test and) trial⁵⁴¹⁷

For the Unbelievers,

But forgive us, our Lord!

For Thou art the Exalted

In Might, the Wise.”

لَا سَتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمَلُكَ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا
رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾

5414. The enemies of Allah are enemies of the righteous, and they hate the righteous. Therefore the righteous must cut themselves off eternally from them, unless they repent and come back to Allah. In that case they receive Allah's mercy and are entitled to all the rights of love and brotherhood. This shows that our detestation is for evil, not for men as such so long as there is a chance for repentance. See also verse 7 below. But we must give no chance to Evil for working evil on our Brotherhood at any time.

5415. Refer again to ix. 114, n. 1365: and n. 5413 above. Abraham's conduct is not condemned: it was a special case, and is not to be imitated by weaker men, who may fall into sin by thinking too much of sinners.

5416. This prayer indicates what our attitude should be. We must trust to Allah, and not to Allah's enemies to protect and befriend ourselves, our families, or those near and dear to us.

5417. In n. 1198 to viii. 25, I have explained the shades of meaning in the word *Fitnat*. In ii. 102 Hārūt and Mārūt were a trial to test the righteous who trusted in Allah from the unrighteous who resorted to evil and superstition. Here the prayer to Allah is that we should be saved from becoming so weak as to tempt the Unbelievers to try to attack and destroy us.

6. There was indeed in them⁵⁴¹⁸
 An excellent example for you
 To follow,—for those
 Whose hope is in Allah
 And in the last Day.
 But if any turn away,
 Truly Allah is Free of all⁵⁴¹⁹
 Wants, Worthy of all Praise.

SECTION 2

7. It may be that Allah
 Will Establish friendship⁵⁴²⁰
 Between you and those whom
 Ye (now) hold as enemies.
 For Allah has power
 (Over all things); And Allah is
 Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
8. Allah forbids you not,
 With regard to those who
 Fight you not for (your) Faith
 Nor drive you out
 Of your homes,
 From dealing kindly and justly⁵⁴²¹
 With them: For Allah loveth
 Those who are just.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ
 وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَفِيفُ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٦﴾

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ
 مِنْهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

لَا يَنْهَى كُرْهُ اللَّهِ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
 وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

5418. *In them:* i.e. in their attitude of prayer and reliance on Allah, and of dissociation from evil.

5419. If any one rejects Allah's Message or Law, the loss is his own. It is not Allah Who needs him or his worship or his sacrifice or his praise. Allah is independent of all wants, and His attributes are inherently deserving of all praise, whether the wicked give such praise or not, in word or deed.

5420. Apparent religious hatred or enmity or persecution may be due to ignorance or over-zeal in a soul, which Allah will forgive and use eventually in His service, as happened in the case of Hadhrat 'Umar, who was a different man before and after his conversion. As stated in n. 5414 above, we should hate evil, but not men as such.

5421. Even with Unbelievers, unless they are rampant and out to destroy us and our Faith, we should deal kindly and equitably, as is shown by our holy Prophet's own example.

9. Allah only forbids you,
With regard to those who
Fight you for (your) Faith,
And drive you out
Of your homes, and support
(Others) in driving you out,
From turning to them
(For friendship and protection).
It is such as turn to them
(In these circumstances),
That do wrong.

10. O ye who believe!
When there come to you
Believing women refugees,⁵⁴²²
Examine (and test) them:
Allah knows best as to
Their Faith: if ye ascertain⁵⁴²³
That they are Believers,
Then send them not back
To the Unbelievers.
They are not lawful (wives)
For the Unbelievers, nor are

إِنَّمَا نَهَيْكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا بِأَعْلَانٍ إِخْرَاجَكُمْ
أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١﴾

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مَهْجِرَاتٍ
فَأَمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۚ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ
فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ لَأَهُنَّ لَهُنَّ جِلَّ لَهُمْ وَلَهُنَّ مَحَلُّونَ هُنَّ
وَأَتَوْهُنَّ مَا نَفَقُوا ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَن تَنكِحُوهُنَّ
إِذَا عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجْرَهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعَصَمِ الْكُفَّارِ

5422. Under the treaty of Hudaibiya [see Introduction to S. xlvi, paragraph 4, condition (3)], women under guardianship (including married women), who fled from the Quraish in Makkah to the Prophet's protection at Madinah were to be sent back. But before this Ayat was issued, the Quraish had already broken the treaty, and some instruction was necessary as to what the Madinah Muslims should do in those circumstances. Muslim women married to Pagan husbands in Makkah were oppressed for their Faith, and some of them came to Madinah as refugees. After this, they were not to be returned to the custody of their Pagan husbands at Makkah, as the marriage of believing women with non-Muslims was held to be dissolved if the husbands did not accept Islam. But in order to give no suspicion to the Pagans that they were badly treated as they lost the dower they had given on marriage, that dower was to be repaid to the husbands. Thus helpless women refugees were to be protected at the cost of the Muslims.

5423. The condition was that they should be Muslim women. How were the Muslims to know? A non-Muslim woman, in order to escape from her lawful guardians in Makkah, might pretend that she was a Muslim. The true state of her mind and heart would be known to Allah alone. But if the Muslims, on an examination of the woman, found that she professed Islam, she was to have protection. The examination would be directed (among other things) to the points mentioned in verse 12 below.

The (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands)
 For them. But pay
 The Unbelievers what they
 Have spent (on their dower).
 And there will be no blame
 On you if ye marry them⁵⁴²⁴
 On payment of their dower
 To them. But hold not
 To the ties (marriage contract) of⁵⁴²⁵
 Unbelieving women: ask
 For what ye have spent
 On their dowers, and let
 The (Unbelievers) ask for
 What they have spent
 (On the dowers of women
 Who come over to you).
 Such is the command
 Of Allah: He judges
 (With justice) between you.
 And Allah is Full of
 Knowledge and Wisdom.

11. And if any
 Of your wives deserts you
 To the Unbelievers,⁵⁴²⁶

وَسَلُّوْا مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ أَنْفَقُوْا ذٰلِكُمْ حَكْمُ اللّٰهِ
 يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

وَإِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقِبْتُمْ

5424. As the marriage was held to be dissolved (see n. 5422 above), there was no bar to the remarriage of the refugee Muslim woman with a Muslim man on the payment of the usual dower to her.

5425. Unbelieving women in a Muslim society would only be a clog and a handicap. There would be neither happiness for them, nor could they conduce in any way to a healthy life of the society in which they lived as aliens. They were to be sent away, as their marriage was held to be dissolved; and the dowers paid to them were to be demanded from the guardians to whom they were sent back, just as in the contrary case the dowers of believing women were to be paid back to their Pagan ex-husbands (n. 5422 above).

5426. A very unlikely contingency, considering how much better position the women occupied in Islam than under Pagan custom. But all contingencies have to be provided for equitably in legislation. If a woman went over to the Pagans, her dower would be recoverable from the Pagans and payable to the deserted husband. If a woman came over from the Pagans, her dower would be payable to the Pagans. Assuming that the two =

And ye have your turn
(By the coming over of
A woman from the other side).
Then pay to those
Whose wives have deserted
The equivalent of what they
Had spent (on their dower).
And fear Allah,
In Whom ye believe.

12. O Prophet!⁵⁴²⁷

When believing women come
To thee to take the oath
Of fealty to thee, that they
Will not associate in worship
Any other thing whatever
With Allah, that they
Will not steal, that they
Will not commit adultery
(Or fornication), that they
Will not kill their children,
That they will not utter
Slander, intentionally forging

فَتَأْتُوا الذِّبْنَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا
وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يَبَايَعْنَكَ
عَلَى أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ
وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ
بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ
وَلَا يَعْصِيَنَّكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايَعْنَهُنَّ
وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

= dowers were equal, the one would be set off against the other as between the two communities; but within the communities the deserted individual would be compensated by the individual who gains a wife. If the dowers were unequal, the balance would be recoverable as between the communities, and the adjustment would then be made as between the individuals.

5427. Now come directions as to the points on which women entering Islam should pledge themselves. Similar points apply to men, but here the question is about women, and especially such as were likely, in those early days of Islam, to come from Pagan society into Muslim society in the conditions discussed in notes 5422 and 5423 above. A pledge on these points would search out their real motives: (1) to worship none but Allah; (2) not to steal; (3) not to indulge in sex outside the marriage tie; (4) not to commit infanticide; (the Pagan Arabs were prone to female infanticide); (5) not to indulge in slander or scandal; and (6) generally, to obey loyally the law and principles of Islam. The last was a comprehensive and sufficient phrase, but it was good to indicate also the special points to which attention was to be directed in those special circumstances. Obedience was of course to be in all things just and reasonable: Islam requires strict discipline but not slavishness.

Falsehood,^{5427-A} and that they
Will not disobey thee
In any just matter,-
Then do thou receive
Their fealty, and pray to Allah⁵⁴²⁸
For the forgiveness (of
Their sins): for Allah is
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

13. O ye who believe!
Turn not (for friendship)
To people on whom
Is the Wrath of Allah.⁵⁴²⁹
Of the Hereafter they are
Already in despair, just as
The Unbelievers are
In despair about those
(Buried) in graves.⁵⁴³⁰

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَكْسِبُوكُمُ الْآخِرَةَ كَمَا كَسَبْتُمْ
الْأُولَىٰ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ ﴿١٦﴾

5427-A. "That they will not utter slander intentionally forging falsehood". Literally, "...nor produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet." These words mean that they should not falsely attribute the paternity of their illegitimate children to their lawful husbands thereby adding to the monstrosity of their original sin of infidelity.

5428. If pledges are sincerely given for future conduct, admission to Islam is open. If there is anything in the past, for which there is evidence of sincere repentance, forgiveness is to be prayed for. Allah forgives in such cases: how can man refuse to give such cases a real chance?

5429. So we come back to the theme with which we started in this Sūra: that we should not turn for friendship and intimacy to those who break Allah's Law and are outlaws in Allah's Kingdom. The various phrases of this question, and the legitimate qualifications, have already been mentioned, and the argument is here rounded off. Cf. also lviii. 14.

5430. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future Life, can therefore have no hope beyond this life. Miserable indeed is this life to them; for the ills of this life are real to them, and they can have no hope of redress. But such is also the state of others—People of the Book or not—who wallow in sin and incur the divine Wrath. Even if they believe in a Future Life, it can only be to them a life of horror, punishment, and despair. For those of Faith the prospect is different. They may suffer in this life, but this life to them is only a fleeting shadow that will soon pass away. The Reality is beyond; there will be full redress in the Beyond, and Achievement and Felicity such as they can scarcely conceive of in the terms of this life.