

Section 10: The Hypocrites Shall Not Attain Their Object

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 73

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

73. “O’ Prophet! strive hard against the infidels and the hypocrites, and be harsh with them, and their abode shall be Hell, and an evil destination it is.”

As long as the hypocrites have not initiated war and have not plotted against Islam, similar to the enemy alien nonbelievers, holy struggle upon them should be done only by tongue. 1

Before the revelation of the abovementioned verse, the Prophet (S) treated the hypocrites gently and nobly, but after the revelation of this verse his treatment became severe toward them.²

Thus, the Prophet (S), who is the source of mercy, is commissioned to severity because of infidelity and hypocrisy of the enemies of Islam. The verse says:

“...And be harsh with them...”

Therefore, an Islamic leader must be decisive and sharp before the arrogance. He must strive against both the manifest foreign enemies and the interior hidden enemies. However, the Holy Struggle should be led under the command and attitude of the leader of the Muslims, who is, indeed, the commander-in-chief of the army in the Islamic system of government. The verse says:

“O’ Prophet! strive hard against the infidels and the hypocrites, and be harsh with them, and their

abode shall be Hell, and an evil destination it is.”

This fact should also be noted that Holy Struggle against infidels and hypocrites is the recompense of these unbelieving people in this world, and their retribution in the coming world will be Hell.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 74

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ
يَنَالُوا وَمَا نَقَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ
وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ
وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

74. “They swear by Allah that they have said nothing, but they certainly have said the word of infidelity and disbelieved after their Islam, and they determined upon what they never attained to, and they did not find fault except because Allah and His Messenger enriched them out of His grace. Therefore if they repent, it will be better for them; and if they turn away, Allah will chastise them with a painful chastisement in this world and the Hereafter, and they shall not have on the earth any guardian or any helper.”

This holy verse includes all the plots that the hypocrites designed and acted against the Holy Prophet (S) and Islam, but most of the commentary books compiled by the Shi’ite and the Sunnite commentators have concerned it to the

plot which is known as the ‘Laylatul-‘Aqabah’ (the Night of ‘Aqabah) where the hypocrites waited in ambush in a neck of land in order to cause the murder of the Prophet (S) by startling his camel. But their plot was found out and they failed. The verse says:

“They swear by Allah that they have said nothing, but they certainly have said the word of infidelity and disbelieved after their Islam, and they determined upon what they never attained to...”

It has been cited that when the Prophet (S) was speaking for the audience in Tabūk, a hypocrite, by the name of Hallās, uttered a blasphemous ugly word. One of the Prophet’s companions (‘Emir-ibn-Qays) informed that insolence to the Prophet (S).

He summoned Hallās, but he denied the matter. ‘Emir said that he told a lie and repeated that word. Then, by the command of the Prophet (S) both of them went near the pulpit of the mosque and swore. ‘Emir asked Allah to send down a verse and to disgrace the hypocrite publicly. This holy verse was

revealed containing the phrase saying:

“They swear by Allah that they have said nothing, but they certainly have said the word of infidelity and disbelieved after their Islam, and they determined upon what they never attained to...”

Then, at the end of the verse, the Qur’ān denotes that if the hypocrites repent and really embrace Islam it is better for them, viz, Allah will forgive them. But if they turn away and remain in their hypocrisy, they must know that Allah will punish them severely both in this world and the coming world, and they will not have any friend or helper on the earth. The verse continues saying:

“...and they did not find fault except because Allah and His Messenger enriched them out of His grace. Therefore if they repent, it will be better for them; and if they turn away, Allah will chastise them with a painful chastisement in this world and the Hereafter, and they shall not have on the earth any guardian or any helper.”

Surah At-Tawbah – Verses 75–78

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَئِنْ ءَاتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

فَلَمَّا ءَاتَاهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

فَاعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

75. “And of them are those who have made a covenant with Allah: ‘If He gives us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms (zakāt) and we will certainly be of the righteous’.”

76. “But when He gave them out of His Grace, they were niggardly of it and they turned away, swerving aside.”

77. “So as a consequence He put hypocrisy into their hearts until the day they will meet Him, because they failed to fulfil unto Allah what they had promised Him and because of what they used to lie.”

78. “Do they not know that Allah knows their hidden (thought) and their secret whisperings, and that Allah is the knower of all unseen (things).

The first verse of the abovementioned group of verses is about some of the hypocrites who made a covenant with Allah and then they broke it. It has also been said that the verse has been revealed concerning ‘Tha‘labat-ibn H^{af}tab’ who was a poor man.

He asked the Prophet (S) that he would pray for him in this regard. He said if the Prophet (S) prayed and he became rich, he would remit considerably in the way of Allah, and he would become one of the benevolent persons.

The Prophet (S) prayed for him and he became rich enough, but he stinted. He also did not participated in ‘Friday Prayer’, and thereupon he made his hypocrisy manifest.

Whatever the sign of the revelation of the verse might be, however, it is about some persons who have always existed and are existed in the societies.

When such people have not wealth and facilities, they may make covenant with Allah that if Allah bestowed upon them properties and they became rich they would pay in charity in His way and would become righteous and of the good servants of Allah.

But they often do not do like that when He causes them to be wealthy. They scant and usually avoid doing good things. The verse says:

“And of them are those who have made a covenant with Allah: ‘If He gives us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms (zak^{at}) and we will certainly be of the righteous’.”

An important matter, regarding this subject mentioned in the second verse, is that this breach of covenant and becoming stingy causes hypocrisy to come into existence in their hearts.

When a person behaves like that, he has to clasp to justification of himself and has to say something through his tongue which he does not believe in his inward. It is similar to the manner of the hypocrites who, in order to protect themselves, expressed Islam falsely and said something that they did not believe. The verse says:

“But when He gave them out of His Grace, they were niggardly of it and they turned away, swerving aside.”

The one who makes covenant, but he breaches it, or promises something but he fails, he has somehow

the same status of hypocrisy and duplicity. Therefore, in this verse, the Qur'an remarks that the appearance of the state of hypocrisy in such persons originates from where they have breached their promise and have told a lie. The verse says:

“So as a consequence He put hypocrisy into their hearts until the day they will meet Him, because they failed to fulfil unto Allah what they had promised Him and because of what they used to lie.”

Thus, according to this verse, breach of promise and falsehood are two signs for hypocrisy. This meaning is also referred to in a tradition narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“There are three signs for a hypocrite: when he speaks he tells a lie; when he promises he fails; and when he is trusted he proves treacherous.”

In the next verse, the Qur'an states about these hypocrites as follows:

“Do they not know that Allah knows their hidden (thought) and their secret whisperings, and that Allah is the knower of all unseen (things).

That is, Allah is aware of all their secrets whether those ones that they tell each other as mysteries, and those secrets which they whisper.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verses 79–80

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ
فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

79. “Those who find fault with the voluntary givers of alms from among the believers, and those who find nothing (to give) but (to the extent of) their endeavour, and they scoff at them, Allah will scoff at them, and for them shall be a painful chastisement.”

80. “Whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them; this is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger; and Allah does not guide the ungodly people.”

In view of the fact that the foundation of the behaviour of the hypocrites was opposing the Muslims and finding fault with them, they often cavilled at the Muslims' affairs and mocked them. Among them was that some of the rich

Muslims remitted their wealth in the way of Allah more than the amount which they were enjoined upon. Those rich believers did it eagerly and at pleasure in order that Islam could glitter more and more. Their main aim was that they might obtain some divine spiritual rewards.

There were also some Muslims who did not possess plenty of properties, but with difficulty they provided some money and spent it. These two parties of the Muslims were mocked and were found fault by the hypocrites.

The hypocrites smiled scornfully at them meaning why those Muslims lost their own wealth. The hypocrites did not believe in the Divine rewards of Hereafter. They imagined that remitting wealth to others was as squandering it, and it was a kind of folly.

The Qur'ān refers to this ignorantly manner of the hypocrites and says:

“Those who find fault with the voluntary givers of alms from among the believers, and those who find nothing (to give) but (to the extent of) their endeavour, and they scoff at them, Allah will scoff at them, and for them shall be a painful chastisement.”

The Qur'ānic phrase which says: ***“Allah will scoff at them”*** means that Allah will give them the retribution of their scoffing, and, in the Hereafter, He will arrange a situation wherein these hypocrites will be mocked by the Muslims. At that circumstance, the believers will scoff at them and laugh at them.

The number 'seventy' here is a code for multiplication and it is not the statement of a definite calculation. In other words, it indicates whatever more you seek forgiveness for them, it will be ineffective. So, it does not mean that if you seek forgiveness seventy one times, for example, they will be forgiven.

Some Islamic literature indicates that the Holy Prophet (S) in this regard has said:

“If I knew seeking forgiveness more than seventy times could save them, I would seek forgiveness.” ³

Man may reach a point in aberration where nothing can save him; like a patient whom no physician is able to help when the soul separates from him. The verse says:

“Whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them; this is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger; and Allah does not guide the ungodly people.”

2. Tafsir-i-Fi-Zil'il-il-Qur'an
3. Majma'ul-Bay'an, the commentary

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