



## CHAPTER 33

### *Al-Aḥzāb: The Allies*

(REVEALED AT MADĪNAH: 9 sections; 73 verses)

This chapter goes under the name of *The Allies*, by which are meant the Quraish, confederated with other idolatrous tribes and the Jews. The opponents had now planned to exterminate the Muslims altogether, and mustering more than ten times the available Muslim force, they besieged Madīnah. The battle, therefore, occupying as it does a most prominent place in the early history of Islām, richly deserves the importance it has been accorded.

The battle of the Allies took place in Shawwāl of the fourth year of the Hijrah, and the revelation of this chapter therefore belongs to that year. Most of the other subjects treated herein, such as those relating to the Prophet's marriage with Zainab, and to his marriages in general, might be fixed a little later, but they cannot be placed beyond the seventh year of the Hijrah. The reason why this chapter occupies this place in the arrangement of the chapters of the Qur'ān is quite obvious. The last group of Makkan chapters preceding this announces a series of mighty prophecies foretelling the subsequent greatness of the Muslims, and here we are shown how the forces employed to crush Islām were made ineffective, thus paving the way for the Muslims to attain the promised greatness.

The first section deals with physical and spiritual relationship in reference to the spiritual relationship of the Prophet with the faithful. The powerful attack of the Quraish and their allies on the Muslims, spoken of in the second and third sections, was really a resort to brute force made with the object of annihilating Islām. Its mention is really meant to give a death-blow to the false propaganda that Islām was spread by the sword, the fact being that Islām spread in spite of the sword. The propaganda now carried on against Islām stands on two pillars of misrepresentation, the first relating to the sword and the second relating to the Prophet's domestic life, which propaganda depicts the Prophet as being voluptuary. As a matter of fact, not only did the Prophet himself retain the utmost simplicity of life to his last days, no change coming over him though he had risen to be the ruler of the whole of Arabia, but he would not allow even his wives to depart from that high standard of simplicity. It was within his means to furnish his wives with every material comfort, but instead of pandering to their earthly desires, he informed them that if they required such provisions, he could not retain them in his household. This is the subject-matter of the fourth section. The fifth section deals with the Prophet's marriage with Zainab, and refutes the objections advanced against him on that score. The sixth generalizes on the objections raised against his domestic life. The seventh draws the attention of the Muslims to certain rules of conduct in their domestic relations. The eighth speaks of those who spread evil reports, and the ninth closes the chapter with an exhortation to the faithful.

## SECTION 1: Spiritual and Physical Relationship

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

1 O Prophet, keep thy duty to Allāh and obey not the disbelievers and the hypocrites.<sup>a</sup> Surely Allāh is ever Knowing, Wise;

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ  
وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝

2 And follow that which is revealed to thee from thy Lord. Surely Allāh is ever Aware of what you do;

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۝  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ۝

3 And trust in Allāh. And Allāh is enough as having charge (of affairs).

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ۝

4 Allāh has not made for any man two hearts within him;<sup>a</sup> nor has He made your wives whom you desert by *Zihār*, your mothers, nor has He made those whom you assert (to be your sons) your sons. These are the words of your mouths. And Allāh speaks the truth and He shows the way.<sup>b</sup>

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي  
جَوْفِهِ ۖ وَمَا جَعَلَ أُمَّرًا وَأَجْعَلُ الرَّءِ  
تُظْهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ  
أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ  
بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ  
يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ۝

1a. The chapter was revealed at a time when the powerful and combined forces of the Arabian tribes threatened Madinah from without and the hypocrites and the Jews assisted them from within to crush the Muslims. It was necessary at such a critical time that the Muslims, who are really addressed here through the Prophet, should not in any way be compliant to their deadly enemies. Or, the meaning is that the Holy Prophet should not be troubled by his critics, for their object was only to carp, and one course of action was as well calculated to give them occasion for carping as another.

4a. This passage does not relate to what follows but sums up what is said in the previous verse. The Prophet is there told not to be compliant to the disbelievers and the hypocrites, but to trust in Allāh alone, because the same heart cannot simultaneously entertain love for Allāh and love for His enemies.

4b. This passage abolishes two customs of the days of ignorance. The first of these is what is called *zihār* or *muḥāhirah*. The word is derived from *zahr*, meaning *back*, and *zihār* consisted in a man saying to his wife *thou art to me as the back of my mother* (LL). No sooner were the words pronounced than the relation between husband and wife ended as by a divorce, but the woman was not at liberty to leave the husband's house and marry elsewhere. She remained in the same house, as a deserted wife. The other custom was that of regarding the adopted son as if he were a real son. This passage abolishes both customs on the same ground; a wife cannot be a real mother, nor a stranger a real son.

The subject of *zihār* is fully discussed in the first section of the 58th chapter.

5 Call them by (the names of) their fathers; this is more equitable with Allāh; but if you know not their fathers, then they are your brethren in faith and your friends. And there is no blame on you in that wherein you make a mistake, but (you are answerable for) that which your hearts purpose. And Allāh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

6 The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own selves, and his wives are (as) their mothers.<sup>a</sup> And the possessors of relationship are closer one to another in the ordinance of Allāh than (other) believers, and those who fled (their homes), except that you do some good to your friends.<sup>b</sup> This is written in the Book.

7 And when We took a covenant from the prophets and from thee, and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary, and We took from them a solemn covenant,<sup>a</sup>

أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ  
اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاُولَئِكَ  
فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَكَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ  
جُنَاحٌ مِمَّا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَا كُنْ مِمَّا  
تَعَدَّتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾

الَّتِي أُولَىٰ بِالمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ  
وَازْوَاجَهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولَئِىَ الْأَرْحَامِ  
بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ  
مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ  
تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ  
ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٦﴾

وَلِذَٰلِكَ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ  
وَمِنكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ  
وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمُ  
مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٧﴾

6a. The Prophet was indeed much more than a father to the believers. He had raised them to the dignity of manhood from a state of savagery, consequently the tie of love which united them to him was stronger than the ordinary ties of love and friendship. The statement that his wives are their mothers has reference to the spiritual relationship, because they were helpful in bringing up the faithful spiritually; see 33a and 34a.

6b. When the Muslims first came to Madinah, a brotherhood was established between those who fled and the helpers, one of the former becoming a brother of one of the latter, and each of the two thus united was entitled to a share of inheritance on the death of the other, according to an old Arab custom. The passage abolishes this custom, maintaining only the brotherhood of Islām in a wider sense, and allowing inheritance only to actual relatives. But a Muslim could assist his brother in Islām by a gift or by making a will in his favour. This is the significance of the words *except that you do some good to your friends*.

7a. The covenant referred to here is generally supposed to be in relation to the delivery of the message with which the prophets are entrusted. But see 3:81, where the making of a covenant with the prophets is spoken of, and that covenant is, with regard to the advent of the Holy Prophet, referred to in Acts 3:21 and elsewhere; for a full discussion on which see 3:81a. The covenant spoken of as having been made with the Holy Prophet evidently refers to the Prophet's verifying all previous revelation. Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus are specially mentioned by name on account of their importance.

8 That He may question the truthful of their truth, and He has prepared for the disbelievers a painful chastisement.

لَيْسَ لَكَ الضُّمِيرُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝

## SECTION 2: The Allies' Attack on Madinah

9 O you who believe, call to mind the favour of Allāh to you when there came against you hosts,<sup>a</sup> so We sent against them a strong wind<sup>b</sup> and hosts that you saw not.<sup>c</sup> And Allāh is ever Seer of what you do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذْ كُرُوا لِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَاسْرُسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ يَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا ۝

10 When they came upon you from above you and from below you,<sup>a</sup> and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts about Allāh.<sup>b</sup>

إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا ۝

9a. The events narrated in this section and a part of the following relate to the siege of Madinah by the combined forces of the Quraysh and their allies — viz., the Ghaṭfān, the 'Ashja' and Murrah, the Fazārah, the Sulaim and the Banī Sa'd and Asad, aided by the Jewish tribe of the Banī Naḍir and the Banī Qurayzah, the latter of whom had made a treaty of alliance with the Muslims — the entire forces numbering from ten to twenty thousand according to different versions, while the Muslims were only about thirteen or fourteen hundred. The Prophet decided to remain within the town and a ditch was dug as a protective measure against the onrush of the powerful force. The battle continued for several days, the enemy eventually taking to flight on a stormy night without being able to inflict any loss upon the Muslims.

9b. The reference is to the great hurricane which caused the enemy to flee. Muir says: "Wearied and damped in spirit, the night set in upon them cold and tempestuous. Wind and rain beat mercilessly on the unprotected camp. The storm rose to a hurricane. Fires were extinguished, tents blown down, cooking-vessels and other equipage overthrown".

9c. The hosts which could not be seen were the angelic hosts which disheartened the enemy. The storm alone would not have made an army of 10,000 to flee in such disorder, were it not that they had already been disheartened by the futility of their attacks upon the besieged Muslims. The angelic assistance is promised in 3:125.

10a. The Ghaṭfān pitched on the east side of the town, on the higher part of the valley, and the Quraysh on the west side, on the lower part of the valley.

10b. Becoming dull of the eyes and the rising of the hearts to the throats indicates the Muslim fear, which was only natural when such a large army was advancing against a mere handful of men. The diverse thoughts signify the fears of the weak-hearted and the hypocrites that Allāh's promise would not prove true and that the enemy would destroy them. As regards the thoughts of the faithful, see v. 22.

11 There were the believers tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking.

هَذَا لِكَابِئِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَرُزِلُوا  
بِرُزَالٍ شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾

12 And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say: Allāh and His Messenger did not promise us (victory) but only to deceive.<sup>a</sup>

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي  
قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَ  
رَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢﴾

13 And when a party of them said: O people of *Yathrib*,<sup>a</sup> you cannot make a stand, so go back.<sup>b</sup> And a party of them asked permission of the Prophet, saying, Our houses are exposed. And they were not exposed. They only desired to run away.

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ  
لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ  
مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ  
وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِنَّ يُرِيدُونَ الْإِفْرَارَ ﴿١٣﴾

14 And if an entry were made upon them from the outlying parts of it, then they were asked to wage war (against the Muslims), they would certainly have done it, and they would not have stayed in it but a little while.<sup>a</sup>

وَلَوْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَقْطَارِهَا شَمَةٌ  
سُيْلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَأَتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلْبَثُوا فِيهَا  
إِلَّا يَسِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

15 And they had indeed made a covenant with Allāh before (that) they would not turn (their) backs.

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
لَا يُوَلُّونَ الْأَدْبَارَ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ

12a. That the prophecies of the Holy Qur'an regarding the ultimate triumph of Islām and the victory of the Muslims were not vague utterances, but clear and emphatic assertions, is shown by what the hypocrites are related to have said. There was an unmistakable promise of victory, but the circumstances were decidedly against the fulfillment of that promise, and hence the weak-hearted said that the promise of victory was given only to deceive them. It should be noted that the weak-hearted, who did not believe in the ultimate triumph of Islām, are here classed with the hypocrites.

13a. *Yathrib* was the name by which Madīnah was known before the Prophet's flight to that city. On the Prophet's flight there, it received the name of *Madīnat al-Nabi* or the City of the Prophet, or simply Madīnah.

13b. That is, go back to idolatry to save your lives, or beat a retreat and return to your houses.

14a. These verses describe the condition of the hypocrites, who advanced excuses for not fighting against the opponents of the Muslims. If an enemy had entered into the city from another side and invited them to join hands with him to fight against the Muslims, they would have been ready to fight. The concluding words show that they would have even left Madīnah to attack the Muslims and would not then have cared for the protection of their houses.

And a covenant with Allāh must be answered for.

**16** Say: Flight will not profit you, if you flee from death or slaughter, and then you will not be allowed to enjoy yourselves but a little.

**17** Say: Who is it that can protect you from Allāh, if He intends harm for you or He intends to show you mercy? And they will not find for themselves a guardian or a helper besides Allāh.

**18** Allāh indeed knows those among you who hinder others and those who say to their brethren, Come to us. And they come not to the fight but a little,

**19** Being niggardly with respect to you. But when fear comes, thou wilt see them looking to thee, their eyes rolling like one swooning because of death. But when fear is gone they smite you with sharp tongues, being covetous of wealth. These have not believed, so Allāh makes their deeds naught. And that is easy for Allāh.

**20** They think the allies are not gone, and if the allies should come (again), they would fain be in the deserts with the desert Arabs, asking for news about you. And if they were among you, they would not fight save a little.

### SECTION 3: Allies' Flight: Quraizah punished

**21** Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allāh an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allāh and the Latter day, and remembers Allāh much.<sup>a</sup>

اللَّهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٦﴾  
قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْفِرَارُ إِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ  
مِنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَإِذْ الْأَثَمُونَ

إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾  
قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ  
رَحْمَةً ۗ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ

اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا ۗ وَلَا تَصِيرُوا ﴿١٨﴾  
قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ السَّعْوَاتِينَ مِنْكُمْ  
وَالتَّقَائِلِينَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا  
وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٩﴾

أَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ  
رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورًا أَعْيُنُهُمْ  
كَالَّذِي يُغْشَىٰ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۖ فَإِذَا  
ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوكُمْ بِالسِّنِّهِ جَدَادٍ  
أَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْطِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا  
فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ  
عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

يَحْسَبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا ۗ  
وَإِنْ يَأْتِ الْأَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْنَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا  
بَادُونَ فِي الْأَعْرَابِ يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ أَسْبَابِكُمْ  
وَلَوْ كَانُوا فِيكُمْ مَا قَاتَلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢١﴾

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ  
حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ  
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

<sup>a</sup>21a, see next page.

22 And when the believers saw the allies, they said: This is what Allāh and His Messenger promised us, and Allāh and His Messenger spoke the truth. And it only added to their faith and submission.<sup>a</sup>

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا  
هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ  
اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ نَوْ مَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا  
إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

23 Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant they made

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا  
عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ

21a. This verse points to a most significant truth and a distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Prophet, viz., that he is the best exemplar and the highest model of virtue for the faithful under all circumstances. If he had not led armies, he could not have served as a model for a general leading armies into battle; if he had not fought personally, he could not have been an exemplar for a soldier laying down his life in the cause of truth, justice, and freedom; if he had not made laws for the guidance of his followers, he could never have been regarded as an outstanding example to a legislator; if he had not decided cases, he could not have served as a light to judges and magistrates; if he had not married, he would have left men unguided in practically half of their everyday duties and could not have shown how to be a kind and affectionate husband and a loving father; if he had not taken revenge on tyrants for the wrongs inflicted on innocent persons, if he had not overcome his persecuting enemies and forgiven them, if he had not overlooked the faults of those attached to him, he could not have been an excellent *exemplar* and a *perfect model*, as he is here pronounced to be. Indeed, it is the distinguishing characteristic of his life that he not only gave practical rules of guidance in all walks of life, but gave by his life a practical illustration of all those rules.

Two more points are worth noting here. In the first place, the Prophet's being an exemplar is a sufficient answer to all those who carp at him, because the very necessity of guiding men under varying mundane circumstances and conditions led him through all those circumstances. Secondly, the moral qualities which are latent within man remain in a dormant condition unless they are called into action. Hence no one can claim the possession of a high moral quality unless he has had occasion to display it, acquiring himself creditably.

The occasion on which the Prophet's being an exemplar for the faithful is pointed out is one on which he showed the greatest firmness in utmost danger, confidence in Divine assistance, and steadfastness in the hardest trials, and the believers are told that they must not lose heart, but follow the example of the Holy Prophet.

22a. The reference here is to the Divine promise that a time would come when the combined forces of Arabia would be put to flight. This promise was given long before, and at a time when the Holy Prophet and his few followers were being severely persecuted at Makkah. Here are the words of one prophecy: "What an army of the allies is here put to flight" (38:11); "Soon shall the hosts be routed and they will show their backs" (54:45), says another. So when the combined forces attacked Madinah, the words of the prophecy were in the heart of every true Muslim. They rejoiced because they were certain that the combined forces of the enemy would be put to flight. It was only the hypocrites who had misgivings, as the last section shows. The battle had, in fact, inspired greater faith in the ultimate triumph of Islām, not only by bringing earlier prophecies to fulfilment but also because it was here that, when the Holy Prophet smashed a big stone with a hammer (a stone which had proved an obstacle in the digging of the ditch) and a flash of light followed, he announced the mighty prophecy that the flash of light had revealed to him the palaces of the Chosroes and the Caesars, and that he had been informed that his followers would be triumphant over both the empires (Ah. IV, p. 303).

with Allāh; so of them is he who has accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least<sup>a</sup> —

**24** That Allāh may reward the truthful for their truth, and chastise the hypocrites, if He please, or turn to them (mercifully). Surely Allāh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>a</sup>

**25** And Allāh turned back the disbelievers in their rage — they gained no advantage. And Allāh sufficed the believers in fighting. And Allāh is ever Strong, Mighty.

**26** And He drove down those of the People of the Book who backed them from their fortresses and He cast awe into their hearts; some you killed and you took captive some.<sup>a</sup>

**27** And He made you heirs to their land and their dwellings and their

نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا  
بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا ﴿٢٤﴾

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ  
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٥﴾

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ  
يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا وَكَفَى اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
الْقِتَالَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ فَوِيًّا عَزِيزًا ﴿٢٦﴾

وَآنزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ  
الْكِتَابِ مِنْ صَيَاصِبِهِمْ وَقَدَّتْ فِي  
قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ  
وَتَأْسِرُونَ فَرِيقًا ﴿٢٧﴾

وَآوَرَكُمُ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَ

23a. Some of the believers had become martyrs in the cause of truth; others yet waited, anxious to lay down their lives in the same cause.

24a. It is clearly stated here, as also in v. 17, that all the hypocrites would not be punished, but that Allāh would be merciful to them, punishing only such as deserved to be punished. Thus it happened that most of them became afterwards sincere converts to Islām.

26a. The Bani Quraizah were in alliance with the Holy Prophet, and when the enemy laid siege to Madinah, they were bound to repel the attack; see 2:84a. Instead of this they sided with the invading army. Muir admits that “it was agreed that the Quraizah would assist the Quraish”, and though he doubts whether “they entered on active hostilities”, there is the surest testimony that they had made an agreement with the Quraish to attack the Muslims from within. Therefore, when the besieging army took to flight and the Quraizah returned to their fortress, it was besieged by the Holy Prophet, for to leave such an internal enemy unpunished would have been a source of ever-present danger to the safety of the Muslim community. They remained besieged for twenty-five days, and then expressed their willingness to surrender, on condition that they should submit to the sentence of punishment pronounced by Sa’d ibn Mu’adh. Had they trusted the Prophet, he would probably have given them the same punishment as he gave to the Qainuqa’, viz., emigration, but Sa’d was exasperated by their treachery and his judgment was that the fighting men should be put to death and the rest made captives (B. 56:168). This was in accordance with the Jewish Law: “And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the

property, and (to) a land which you have not yet trodden. And Allāh is ever Possessor of power over all things.<sup>a</sup>

أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَ أَرْضًا لَمْ تَطْعُوهَا وَ كَانَ  
اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا ﴿٦٠﴾

#### SECTION 4: Prophet's Domestic Simplicity

28 O Prophet, say to thy wives: If you desire this world's life and its adornment, come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing.<sup>a</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتُنَّ  
تُرِيدْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَ زَيَّنْتَهَا  
فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأُسْرِحْكِنَّ  
سَرَاحًا جَمِيدًا ﴿٦١﴾

29 And if you desire Allāh and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then surely Allāh has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward.

وَ إِن كُنْتُنَّ تُرِيدْنَ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ  
وَ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ  
لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُنَّ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٢﴾

30 O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you is guilty of manifestly improper conduct, the chastisement

يُنِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَن يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ  
بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَّفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ

sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself" (Deut. 20:12–14). Three hundred men suffered death under this sentence, and their lands fell into the hands of the Muslims.

27a. The *land which you have not yet trodden* refers to the foreign lands which are here promised to the Muslims and which they conquered later.

28a. The introduction of the subject of the Holy Prophet's simplicity in domestic life is most fitting here. The Muslims were now growing powerful and wealthier. The victory at Badr, and the possession of the lands and property of the Qurayzah, had increased their wealth. It was natural, in the circumstances, that the wives of the Prophet should desire to be furnished with better necessities of life than they had previously enjoyed. But just at this time we find a revelation enjoining the strictest simplicity upon them. These strictures could not emanate from an impostor, nor even from a man of the world whose power and wealth were increasing daily. If the Prophet had allowed his wives to share in the general prosperity of the community, there could not have been the least objection. But he received a revelation which deprived him and those most nearly related to him of those material benefits which others could easily acquire. The splendours of this world could be obtained, and were not forbidden to any Muslim, but such transitory vanities were not to be admitted into the household of God's Prophet. As he possessed the means, his wives would be allowed to depart with rich and ample gifts, if such was their desire. This passage also throws light on the object of the Prophet's marriages, for if his object were sensual enjoyment, he could not have been ready to sacrifice the ease and comforts attendant upon mere carnal desire to the retention of that Spartan simplicity enjoined upon his household.

will be doubled for her. And this is easy for Allāh.<sup>a</sup> ﴿ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا﴾

## Part 22

**31** And whoever of you is obedient to Allāh and His Messenger and does good, We shall give her a double reward, and We have prepared for her an honourable sustenance.<sup>a</sup>

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْحَسَنَاتِ أَضْعَافًا أُخْرَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهَا مَرَاتِبًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

**32** O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women. If you would keep your duty, be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a word of goodness.<sup>a</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا النِّسَاءُ الرَّبِّيَّ لَسْتِنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنْ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَحْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾

**33** And stay in your houses and display not (your beauty) like the dis-

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ

30a. The word *fāḥiṣhah* means *any evil exceeding the proper bounds, anything not agreeable with truth and with rule or measure, or anything unseemly* (LL). As already shown in 4:19c, it includes *hatred and desertion of the husband, doing harm to the husband and his family*. It does not necessarily mean *adultery or lewdness*. Hence many commentators take the word *fāḥiṣhah* here in its broadest sense as meaning anything which may give offence to the Prophet.

It should be noted that not only are the Prophet's wives denied the comforts of life which were available to other Muslim ladies, but any unseemly conduct on their part brought double the ordinary punishment. Could this be the work of an impostor? In their case the punishment is increased because, being in the Prophet's house, they had a better chance to be guided aright and to pass their lives in the greatest purity. It should be noted that there is no actual occurrence of the least indecency on the part of any of the Prophet's wives.

31a. The double reward spoken of here means only greater reward, as the words *honourable sustenance* show. The greater reward is due to their having denied themselves the ordinary comforts of life by remaining in the Prophet's house.

32a. Though the injunction is given in particular to the wives of the Prophet, it is really a rule of life for all Muslim women, and promotes purity of heart and chastity in the relations between the sexes. They are not forbidden to speak to men, but, as a safeguard against possible inclination of the heart to evil thoughts, they are told not to indulge in soft and amorous conversation with the opposite sex. The wives of the Prophet are here told that they were not like other women, as they had to come in contact with large numbers of people, who would come to them to learn the treasures of wisdom which they received from the Prophet. An allusion to this is contained in the concluding words of the verse, *and speak a word of goodness*.

playing of the ignorance of yore; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allāh and His Messenger. Allāh only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O people of the household, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.<sup>a</sup>

34 And remember that which is recited in your houses of the messages of Allāh and the Wisdom. Surely Allāh is ever Knower of subtilities, Aware.<sup>a</sup>

وَآتَيْنَ الزَّكَاةَ وَآطَعَنَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولَهُ  
إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ  
الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٨٣﴾

وَإِذْ كُنَّا مَا يَلْقَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ  
آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ  
لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٨٤﴾

### SECTION 5: Prophet's Marriage with Zainab

35 Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَ  
الصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ

33a. The means of purification are suggested in the previous verses: to observe the utmost simplicity of life, to avoid every indecency, and not to display their beauty to others. The uncleanness which Allāh will thus take away is the uncleanness of the desire for worldly riches. As the Prophet himself was an exemplar to the faithful, so was his household to be an example of simplicity and purity to Muslim women; hence they are called *mothers of the faithful*; see 6a.

It should also be noted that the Prophet's wives are here addressed as *ahl al-bait*, or *the people of the household*, they being primarily so, while his children and children's children may also be included. The use of the phrase *ahl al-bait* on the only two other occasions in the Holy Qur'ān is to signify the wife, as in the case of Abraham's wife (11:73) and Amrān's wife or Moses' mother (28:12), and this use also shows that it is the wife, who is mistress of the house, that is indicated by the phrase *ahl al-bait*. Thus under this verse the Prophet's children could only claim a sanctity in which his wives also shared.

It is a fact that not only did the wives of the Prophet retain the utmost simplicity of life in his lifetime, but even after his death, when the Muslims grew a very wealthy nation and big stipends were paid to the Prophet's wives, they did not allow wealth to accumulate in their houses but distributed it to deserving people. Of 'Ā'ishah especially it is related that she was so generous in giving away what came to her that she would sometimes be left without the means for an evening meal.

34a. The wives of the Prophet were not only to serve as models of virtue to the faithful, men as well as women, but they were also required to teach the precepts of religion, of that which was recited in their houses of the messages of Allāh and of Wisdom, to the faithful. Hence they are told that they must remember not only the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān — the messages of Allāh — but also the Wisdom which the Prophet taught by his practice and word, i.e., the Sunnah.



be no difficulty for the believers about the wives of their adopted sons, when they have dissolved their marriage-tie. And Allāh's command is ever performed.<sup>4</sup>

إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ  
أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

37a. This verse consists of two distinct and separate parts, the first dealing with Zaid's divorce of Zainab, and the second beginning with *so when Zaid*, etc., with the Holy Prophet's marriage with Zainab, and therefore a full explanation of the events in connection with this marriage is necessary. Zaid belonged to the tribe of Kalb, and was taken prisoner in childhood and sold as a slave at Makkah, where he was bought by Khadijah's brother, who gave him over to his sister, and she in turn presented him to the Holy Prophet, who, as was his wont, liberated him. But Zaid was so much attached to the Holy Prophet, that when the Prophet gave him the option of accompanying his father to his home or of remaining with him, Zaid chose the latter course. On account of his great attachment, Zaid was called the son of Muḥammad, and he was one of the early converts to Islām. It is to these events that the opening words of the verse refer, when they speak of Zaid as being one to whom Allāh as well as the Prophet had shown favour.

Zainab was the daughter of the Prophet's own aunt, Umamah, daughter of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. She was one of the early converts to Islām, and the Holy Prophet proposed to her brother that she should be given in marriage to Zaid. Both brother and sister were averse to this match, and only yielded under pressure from the Holy Prophet, for which see the last note. It is related that they both desired that the Holy Prophet himself should marry Zainab. In fact, when marriage was first proposed to Zainab, she gave her assent under the impression that the Prophet wanted her for himself (Rz), but the Prophet insisted that she should accept Zaid (IJ).

The marriage was, however, not a happy one. Zainab was harsh of temper, and she never liked Zaid on account of the stigma of slavery, which attached to his name. Differences arose, and Zaid expressed a desire to the Holy Prophet of divorcing Zainab. The news was grieving for the Prophet, for it was he who had insisted upon the marriage, and he therefore advised Zaid not to divorce her. He feared that people would object that a marriage which had been arranged by the Prophet was unsuccessful. According to one interpretation, it is to this circumstance that the words refer, *and thou fearedst men, and Allāh has a greater right that thou shouldst fear Him*. According to this interpretation it is also to the same matter that the words *and thou concealedst in thy heart what Allāh would bring to light* refer, for the Prophet did not like that the disagreements between Zainab and Zaid should become generally known. The Prophet's injunction to Zaid not to divorce his wife is contained in unmistakable terms in the Holy Qur'ān. But it was all in vain, and Zaid at last divorced Zainab. According to another interpretation, however, the words *and thou concealedst in thy heart to thou shouldst fear Him*, are a continuation of the advice which the Prophet gave to Zaid not to divorce Zainab (Rz). This interpretation suits the context even better than the first interpretation, for as we are further on told in v. 39, the prophets fear none but God.

After Zainab was divorced the Holy Prophet took her in marriage, that being the wish of the lady and her relatives before her marriage to Zaid, and the Prophet was, now that the marriage arranged by him proved unsuccessful, morally bound to accept their wishes. Moreover, the Qur'ān had declared against an adopted son being regarded as if he were a real son, and now there was an opportunity where the Holy Prophet could by his own example deal a death-blow to that custom. This reason is plainly given in the second part of the verse: *We gave her to thee as a wife, so that there should be no difficulty for the believers about the wives of their adopted sons*. The Qur'ān does not give any other reason for the marriage.

This simple story is made the basis of a mean attack on the Holy Prophet. It is stated

38 There is no harm for the Prophet in that which Allāh has ordained for him. Such has been the way of Allāh with those who have gone before. And the command of Allāh is a decree that is made absolute —

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا  
فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ تَسْبِيَةً لِلَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ  
خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ  
قَدْرًا مُقَدَّرًا ۝

39 Those who deliver the messages of Allāh and fear Him, and fear none but Allāh. And Allāh is Sufficient to take account.

الَّذِينَ يَبْلُغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ  
وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ وَكَفَى  
بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ۝

40 Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the prophets. And Allāh is ever Knower of all things.<sup>a</sup>

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ۝

that the Prophet, having seen Zainab by chance through a half-open door, was fascinated by her beauty, and that Zaid, having come to know of this, divorced her, and then she became the Prophet's wife. That Muir and Arnold, not to mention more prejudiced writers, accept this, only shows how far religious prejudice may carry "criticism". It is admitted that Zainab was the daughter of the Prophet's real aunt; it is admitted that she was one of the early believers in Islām who fled to Madinah; it is admitted that the Prophet himself had arranged the marriage between Zaid and Zainab; and finally it is admitted that Zainab desired, as did also her brother, before she was married to Zaid, that she should be taken in marriage by the Holy Prophet. What was it then which prevented the Prophet from marrying her when she was a virgin? Had he not seen her before? He was so closely related to her that on the face of it such a supposition is absurd. Then there was no seclusion of women before Zainab's marriage with the Prophet, a fact the truth of which is attested by Muir himself. Having not only seen her when she was a virgin, but knowing her fully well on account of her close relationship to him and her early belief in Islām, while both she and her relatives were desirous that the Prophet should take her for a wife, what hindered the Prophet from marrying her? The story is so absurd that any man possessing ordinary common sense would unhesitatingly reject it.

40a. The word *khātam* means a seal or the last part or portion of a thing, the latter being the primary significance of the word *khātim*. It may further be noted that *khātam al-qaum* always means the last of the people — *ākhiru-hum* (T, LL). Though the Holy Prophet was admittedly the last of the prophets, and even history shows that no prophet appeared after him in the world, yet the Holy Qur'an has adopted the word *khātam* and not *khātim*, because a deeper significance is carried in the phrase *Seal of the prophets* than mere finality. In fact, it indicates finality combined with perfection of prophethood, along with a continuance among his followers of certain blessings of prophethood. He is the Seal of the prophets because with him the object of prophethood, the manifestation of Divine will in Laws which should guide humanity, was finally accomplished in the revelation of a perfect law in the Holy Qur'an, and he is also the Seal of the prophets because certain favours bestowed on prophets were forever to continue among his followers. The office of the prophet was only necessary to guide men, either by giving them a law or by removing the imperfections of a previously existing law, or by giving certain new directions to meet the requirements of the times, because the circumstances

## SECTION 6: The Prophet's Marriages

41 O you who believe, remember Allāh with much remembrance,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا  
كَثِيرًا ①

42 And glorify Him morning and evening.

وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ②

43 He it is Who sends blessings on you, and (so do) His angels, that He may bring you forth out of darkness into light. And He is ever Merciful to the believers.<sup>a</sup>

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ  
لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ط  
وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا ③

44 Their salutation on the day they meet Him will be, Peace! and He has prepared for them an honourable reward.

تَحِيَّاتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهُ سَلَامٌ وَأَعَدَّ  
لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَرِيمًا ④

45 O Prophet, surely We have sent thee as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا  
وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ⑤

of earlier human society did not allow the revelation of a perfect law which should suit the requirements of different generations or different places. Hence prophets were constantly raised. But through the Holy Prophet a perfect law was given, suiting the requirements of all ages and all countries, and this law was guarded against all corruption, and the office of the prophet was therefore no more required. But this did not mean that the Divine favours bestowed on His chosen servants were to be denied to the chosen ones among the Muslims. Men did not need a new law, because they had a perfect law with them, but they did stand in need of receiving Divine favours. The highest of these favours is Divine inspiration, and it is recognized by Islām that the Divine Being speaks to His chosen ones now as He spoke in the past, but such people are not *prophets* in the real sense of the word. According to a most reliable ḥadīth, the Prophet said “there will be in my community”, i.e., among the Muslims, “men who will be spoken to (by God), though they will not be prophets” (B. 62:6). According to another version of the same ḥadīth, such people are given the name *muhaddath* (B. 62:6).

What is stated above is corroborated by a saying of the Holy Prophet: *Nothing has remained of prophethood except mubashsharāt*, i.e., *good news*. And being asked what was meant by *mubashsharāt*, or *good news*, he said: “True visions” (B. 91:5). According to another ḥadīth, he is reported to have said: “The vision of the believer is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood” (B. 91:4). Prophethood itself has gone, but one of its blessings remains, and will exist forever among the followers of the Holy Prophet.

43a. This section deals with the marriages and divorces of the Prophet and fittingly opens with a statement showing how the Holy Prophet had made God the greatest force in the lives of a people who had never known God. Again it was by means of the transformation wrought by him that his companions were led out of the darkness of ignorance. Could it then be that the man who purified others was himself impure? Could a sensual man, a slave of his passions, turn a nation of idolatrous and ignorant men into a godly people? This argument is expanded and made lucid in the verses that follow.