

Al-Ahzab [The Confederates] **Madinan Period**

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

[1] O Prophet, fear Allah and do not obey the unbelievers and the hypocrites. Verily Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

[2] Follow that which is revealed to you from your Lord. Verily Allah is fully aware of all that you do.

[3] Put your trust in Allah: Allah is sufficient as Guardian.

[4] Allah has never put two hearts within one person's body; nor has He made your wives, whom you compare to your mothers' backs (to divorce them), your true mothers; nor has He made those whom you adopt as sons your own sons. These are only words that you utter with your mouths.¹ But Allah proclaims the Truth and directs you to the Right Path.

[5] Call your adopted sons after their true father; that is more equitable in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their true fathers, then regard them as your brethren in faith and as allies. You will not be taken to task for your mistaken utterances, but you will be taken to task for what you say deliberately. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

1. *Zihar* means to declare one's wife to be like one's mother.

[6] Surely the Prophet has a greater claim over the believers than they have over each other, and his wives are their mothers. According to the Book of Allah, blood relatives have greater claim over each other than the rest of the believers and the Emigrants (in the cause of Allah), except that you may do some good to your allies (if you so wish). This is inscribed in the Book of Allah.

[7] And call to mind, (O Prophet), when We took the covenant from all Prophets; and also from you and Noah and Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary. We took from them a solemn covenant²

[8] so that (their Lord) may question the truthful about their truthfulness. As for the unbelievers, He has kept a painful chastisement in store for them.

[9] Believers,³ call to mind Allah's favour to you when enemy hosts invaded you. Then We sent against them a wind and hosts that you did not see⁴ although Allah was observing all that you were then doing.

2. *In this verse God reminds the Prophet (peace be on him) that, like all other Prophets, he too had made a solemn covenant with God, a covenant that he should follow strictly. If one bears in mind the preceding verses, it is evident that the covenant consisted of the Prophet's commitment to obey God's every command and to ask others to do the same. The covenant*

also comprised the Prophet's commitment to faithfully convey God's commands to others and to spare no effort in putting them into effect. This covenant has also been mentioned at several other places in the Qur'an, e.g. in al-Baqarah 2: 83; Al 'Imran 3:187; al-Ma'idah 5: 7; al-A 'raf 6:169-171 and al-Shura 42:13.

3. From here on until verse 27, the discourse centres on the Battle of the Ahzab and the expedition against Banu Qurayzah.

4. The "hosts that you did not see" is an allusion to the angels who fought on the side of the Muslims.

[10] When they came upon you from above you and from below you, when your eyes were stupefied with horror and your hearts leapt to your throats, and you began to entertain diverse thoughts about Allah.

[11] The believers were then put to a severe test and were most violently convulsed.

[12] And call to mind when the hypocrites and all those with diseased hearts said: "All that Allah and His Messenger had promised us was nothing but deceit."

[13] And when a section of them said: "(O people of Yathrib), now there is no place for you to stay, so turn back." (And call to mind) when a section of them was seeking permission from the Prophet to leave, saying: "Our houses are exposed (to attack)," although they were not exposed (to attack); they only wished to flee (from the battle-front).

[14] If the enemy were to enter the town from various directions, and they were summoned to act treacherously, they would have succumbed to it and would have shown little reluctance in doing so.

[15] They had earlier covenanted with Allah that they would not turn their backs in flight. And a covenant made with Allah must needs be answered for.

[16] (O Prophet), tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will not avail you. You will have little time after that to enjoy (the pleasures of life)."

[17] Say (to them): "Who can protect you from Allah if He desires an evil for you? And who can prevent Him if He desires to show mercy to you?" They shall find none other than Allah to be their protector or helper.

[18] Allah knows well those of you who create obstructions (in war efforts) and say to their brethren: "Come and join us." They hardly take any part in battle.

[19] They are utterly niggardly (in coming to your aid). Whenever there is danger, you will see them looking at you, their eyes rolling as though they were on the verge of fainting at the approach of death. But when the danger passes away, their greed for wealth prompts them to greet you with their sharp, scissor-like tongues. These are the ones who never truly believed, and so Allah has caused their deeds to be reduced to naught. That is easy enough for Allah.

[20] They think that the invading confederates have not yet gone. But if the confederates were to mount another assault, they would wish to be in the desert among the bedouins and keep themselves informed about you from there. But even if they remained in your midst, hardly would they fight.

[21] Surely there was a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah,⁵ for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much.

[22] As for the true believers, when they saw the invading confederates, they cried out: "This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and what Allah and His Messenger said was absolutely true." This only increased their faith and submission.

[23] Among the believers there are those who have remained true to the covenant they made with Allah. Among those some of them have fulfilled their vow and others await the appointed time. They have not changed in the least.

[24] (All this is) in order that Allah may reward the truthful for their truthfulness, and either punish the hypocrites or, if He so wills, accept their repentance. Verily Allah is Most Pardoning, Most Compassionate.

5. It can also be translated as follows: "Surely there is (rather than there was) a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah"

[25] Allah sent back the unbelievers empty-handed, their hearts seething with rage. Allah sufficed the believers in their fight. Allah is Most Powerful, Most Mighty.

[26] Allah brought down from their fortresses those People of the Book who had supported the invading confederates⁶ and cast such terror into their hearts that some of them you kill and some of them you take captive.

[27] Allah made you inherit their land, their dwellings, and their goods, and a piece of land on which you had not yet trodden. Verily Allah has power over all things.

[28] O Prophet, tell your wives: "If you seek the world and its embellishments, then come and I will make some provision for you and release you in an honourable way."⁷

[29] But if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the Abode of the Hereafter, then surely Allah has prepared a great reward for those of you who do good."

[30] Wives of the Prophet, if any of you commit flagrant indecency,⁸ her chastisement shall be doubled. That is easy for Allah.

[31] But whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Messenger and does good deeds, Allah will double her reward. We have prepared for her a generous provision.

6. "The invading confederates" here refers to the Jews of the Qurayzah tribe.

7. *This verse was revealed at a time when the Prophet (peace be on him) was facing severe financial stringency so much so that his household went without food for days. The circumstances that obtained at the time naturally perturbed the Prophet's Wives.*

8. *This does not mean that there was, God forbid, any serious possibility that the Prophet's wives would commit any acts of indecency. The purpose of the statement was to simply make the Prophet's wives conscious of their high station, as the mothers of the believers, and to remind them that they were expected to take due care of their dignity and distinguished position.*

[32] Wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women. If you fear Allah, do not be too complaisant in your speech lest those with diseased hearts should covet you; but speak in a straight forward manner.

[33] And stay in your homes and do not go about displaying your allurements as in the former Time of ignorance. Establish Prayer, give *Zakah*, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only wishes to remove uncleanness from you, O members of the (Prophet's) household, and to purify you completely.

[34] Remember the Signs of Allah and the words of wisdom which are rehearsed in your homes. Verily Allah is All-Subtle, All-Aware.⁹

[35] Surely the men who submit (to Allah) and the women who submit (to Allah), the men who have faith and the women who have faith, the men who are obedient and the women who are obedient, the men who are truthful and the women who are truthful; the men who are steadfast and the women who are steadfast, the men who humble themselves (to Allah) and the women who humble themselves (to Allah), the men who give alms and the women who give alms, the men who fast and the women who fast, the men who guard their Chastity and the women who guard their chastity, the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah much: for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward.

9. *To say that "Allah is All-Aware" amounts to saying that He has full knowledge of everything, including the most hidden secrets.*

[36] It does not behove a believer, male or female, that when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair they should exercise their choice. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has strayed to manifest error.

[37] (O Prophet), call to mind when you said to him whom Allah had favoured and you had favoured: "Cleave to your wife and fear Allah,"¹⁰ and you concealed within yourself for fear of people what Allah was to reveal, although Allah has greater right that you fear Him.¹¹ So when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her,¹² We gave her in marriage to you so that there should not any constraint for the believers regarding the wives of their adopted sons after they had accomplished whatever they would of them. And Allah's command was bound to be accomplished.

10. The words "... him whom Allah had favoured" allude to Zayd ibn Harithah who was the Prophet's freed slave and adopted son. Zayd's wife at that time was Zaynab, the Prophet's cousin whom he himself had given in marriage to him. The spouses, however, were not maritally well adjusted. As a result, Zayd felt inclined to divorce Zaynab.

11. God wanted the Prophet (peace be on him) to marry Zaynab, after Zayd would divorce her, the purpose being to put an end to the ancient custom according to which a person's adopted son was regarded, in quite a legal sense, as his own. The Prophet (peace be on him), however, was not inclined to marry Zaynab for he took into account the severe reaction that this might provoke among his people. It was for this reason that he earnestly tried to dissuade Zayd from divorcing Zaynab.

12. That is, Zayd accomplished his desire of definitively divorcing his wife. As a result, all legal relationship between him and his wife was sundered.

[38] There could be no hindrance to the Prophet regarding what Allah ordained for him. Such has been Allah's Way (with the Prophets) who went before, Allah's command is a decree firmly determined.

[39] (This is Allah's Way) regarding those who deliver the Messages of Allah and who fear Him, and fear no one else than Allah. Allah is Sufficient as a Reckoner.

[40] Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets.¹³ Allah has full knowledge of everything.

13. This one sentence cuts at the root of all objections ventilated by the opponents against the Prophet's marriage. Their first objection was that the Prophet (peace be on him) had married his own daughter-in-law. This was answered by the revelation: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men "The implication of the statement being that since Zayd was not the Prophet's son, it was not unlawful for him to marry Zayd's divorced wife. The opponents then proffered another objection: even though an adopted son cannot be equated as one's own, there was nevertheless no need to make use of such facilitating permission. In response, the essential position of the Prophet (peace be on him) was explained by saying: "... he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets." The implication of this statement is clear: that as God's Messenger it was incumbent on Muhammad (peace be on him) to put an end to all unjustified constraints which had encumbered people's lives by prohibiting that which is lawful. In this circumstance it was his duty to restore the lawfulness of the acts that are lawful in God's sight. This aspect of the Prophet's duty was further stressed by saying that he is: "...the seal of the Prophets," The implication being that apart from being God's Messenger, he was also the seal of the Prophets after whom no other Prophet would come. Hence if anything required reform, either in the legal or social sphere, it was only the Prophet (peace be on him) who could bring that about. The fact of his being the final Prophet made it all the more necessary that he should do away with all the objectionable customs and practices of the Time of Ignorance. This point was even further emphasised by saying: "Allah has full knowledge of everything," meaning that God fully knows why it was necessary that a certain aspect of Jahiliyah should be extirpated through the Prophet (peace be on him) at a given time, and that He also knows the harm of letting the status quo ante continue.

[41] Believers, remember Allah much

[42] and glorify Him morning and evening.

[43] It is He Who lavishes His blessings on you and His angels invoke blessings on you that He may lead you out of darkness into light. He is Most Compassionate to the believers.

[44] On the Day they meet Him they will be greeted with: "Peace" He has prepared for them a generous reward.

[45] O Prophet, We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner,

[46] as one who calls people to Allah by His leave, and as a bright, shining lamp,

[47] Announce to the believers the good tidings that Allah has kept bounteous blessings in store for them.

[48] Do not yield to the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and disregard the hurt that comes from them,¹⁴ and put your trust in Allah. Allah suffices as the Guardian to entrust one's affairs to.

[49] Believers, when you marry believing Women and then divorce them before you have touched them, you may not require them to observe a waiting period that you might reckon against them. So make provision for them and release them in an honourable manner.

14. The Prophet (peace be on him) was asked to disregard the opponents hostile criticism of his marriage.

[50] O Prophet, We have made lawful for you your wives whose bridal dues you have paid,¹⁵ and the slave-girls you possess from among the prisoners of war, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and paternal aunts, and the daughters of your maternal uncles and maternal aunts who have migrated with you, and a believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet and whom he wants to take in marriage.¹⁶ (O Prophet), this privilege is yours alone to the exclusion of other believers. We know well what restrictions We have imposed upon them as regards their wives and those whom their right hands possess, (and have exempted you from those restrictions) that there may be no constraint upon you. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

[51] Of them you may put off any of them you wish, and you may take any of them whom you wish, and you may call back any of those whom you had (temporarily) set aside: there will be no blame on you (on this account). It is likelier that they will thus be comforted, and will not grieve, and every one of them will be well-pleased with what you give them. Allah knows what is in your hearts. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Forbearing.

15. *This answered the criticism of those who said that the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade others to keep more than four wives, but he himself had taken a fifth. It is pertinent to mention that at that time the Prophet (peace be on him) already had four wives, namely 'A'ishah, Sawdah, Hafsa and Umm Salamah.*

16. *That is, in addition to these five wives (i.e. Zaynab and the four mentioned in n.15 above) the Prophet (peace be on him) was also permitted to take other wives belonging to the categories mentioned in the present verse.*

[52] Thereafter women will not be lawful for you, and it will not be lawful for you to take other wives in place of them, even though their beauty might please you,¹⁷ unless they be those whom your right hand owns.¹⁸ Allah is watchful over everything.

[53] Believers, enter not the houses of the Prophet without his permission, nor wait for a meal to be prepared; instead enter when you are invited to eat, and when you have had the meal, disperse. Do not linger in idle talk. That is hurtful to the Prophet but he does not express it out of shyness; but Allah is not ashamed of speaking out the Truth. And if you were to ask the wives of the Prophet for something, ask from behind a curtain. That is more apt for the cleanness of your hearts and theirs. It is not lawful for you to cause hurt to Allah's Messenger, nor to ever marry his wives after him. Surely that would be an enormous sin in Allah's sight.

17. *This directive has two meanings. First, that except for the women with whom the Prophet's marriage was declared to be lawful in verse 50 above, none else was lawful for him. Second, it was stressed that the Prophet's wives had made up their minds to put up with every kind of straitened circumstance. They had chosen to live with him through thick and thin and had spurned the world and its allurements in order to achieve success and felicity in the Hereafter. They had also clearly indicated their satisfaction with whatever treatment might be meted out to them by the Prophet (peace be on him). In view of all this, it was no longer lawful for him to divorce any of his wives and to replace them with others.*

18. *This verse makes it clear that it is lawful to have conjugal relations with one's slave-girls in addition to the women whom one has contracted in marriage; furthermore, their maximum number is not specified. This point is also mentioned in al-Nisa' 4: 3; al-Mu'minun 23: 6; and al-Ma'arij 70:30.*

[54] (It does not matter) whether you disclose something or conceal it, for Allah certainly knows everything.

[55] It will not be blameworthy for the wives of the Prophet if their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, and the women with whom they have social relations, and the persons whom their right hands possess enter their houses. (O women), shun disobeying Allah. Allah is watchful over everything.

[56] Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. Believers, invoke blessings and peace on him.¹⁹

[57] Verily those who cause annoyance to Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter and has prepared for them a humiliating Chastisement.

[58] Those who cause hurt to believing men and to believing women have invited upon themselves a calumny and a manifest sin.

19. To say that God blesses the Prophet (peace be on him) means that He is extremely benevolent towards him: He praises him immensely, bestows grace on his work, exalts his name, and showers His benedictions on him. Likewise, to say that the angels send their blessings on the Prophet means that they have the highest degree of love and reverence for him and that they pray to God to grant him ever higher ranks. The invocation of God's blessings on the Prophet by believers means that they pray to God to bestow upon him an abundance of His blessings.

[59] O Prophet, enjoin your wives and your daughters and the believing women, to draw a part of their outer coverings around them.²⁰ It is likelier that they will be recognised and not molested.²¹ Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

[60] If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts there is a sickness, and the scandal mongers in Madinah do not desist from their vile acts, We shall urge you to take action against them, and then they will hardly be able to stay in the city with you.

[61] They shall be cursed from all around and they shall be ruthlessly killed wherever they are seized.

[62] This has been Allah's Way with those who have gone before, and you shall find no change in Allah's Way.

[63] People ask you concerning the Hour (of Resurrection). Say: "Allah alone has knowledge of it. What do you know? Perhaps the Hour is nigh."

[64] Allah has cursed the unbelievers and has prepared for them a Blazing Fire;

20. That is, they should wear their over-garment (chadar) and veil. In other words, they should not move about with their faces uncovered.

21. "... It is likelier that they will thus be recognised ..." that is, when people see them dressed in garments exuding simplicity and modesty they will be recognised as honourable and chaste women. They will appear distinct from women of loose character who are ever on the hunt for lewd encounters. These women are unlike those whom immoral men would seek out to gratify their carnal desires. As for the words "and will not be molested," they mean that since those women will be perceived as decent ladies they will not be subjected to teasing and harassment to which men of vile character have recourse when they encounter women not particularly known for their uprightness and firmness of character.

[65] therein they shall abide forever. They shall find none to protect or help them.

[66] On that Day when their faces shall be turned around in the Fire, they will say: "Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger."

[67] They will say: "Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they turned us away from the Right Way.

[68] Our Lord, mete out to them a double chastisement and lay upon them a mighty curse."

[69] Believers, do not be like those who distressed Moses and then Allah declared him quit of the ill they spoke about him; and he had a high standing with Allah.

[70] Believers, fear Allah and speak the truth:

[71] Allah will set your deeds right for you and will forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has achieved a great triumph.

[72] We offered the trust²² to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of doing so; but man carried it. Surely he is wrong-doing, ignorant.²³

[73] (The consequence of man's carrying the trust is) that Allah may chastise hypocritical men and hypocritical women and accept the repentance of believing men and believing women. He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

22. The word "trust" here signifies the burden of responsibilities which God has placed on man after endowing him with reason as well as power and authority in the earth.

23. That is, even though man is the bearer of a great trust from God, he does not show the requisite sense of responsibility and is wont to wrong himself by committing breach of trust.