

Al-Mumtahinah [The Examining] **Madinan Period**

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

[1] Believers,¹ if you have left (your homes and) have come forth to struggle in My Way and to seek My good pleasure; do not make friends with My enemies and your enemies. You befriend them whereas they have spurned the Truth that has come to you; and (such is their enmity that) they expel the Messenger and yourselves for no other reason than that you believe in Allah, your Lord. You send to them messages of friendship in secrecy, although I know well whatever you do, be it secretly or publicly. And whosoever of you does so has indeed strayed far away from the Straight Path.

[2] If they could overcome you, they would act as your foes and would hurt you by their hands and tongues, and would love to see you become unbelievers.

1. Commentators on the Qur'an are agreed that these verses were revealed at the time when a letter by Hatib ibn Abi Balta`ah addressed to the unbelievers of Makkah was intercepted. This letter contained information about the Prophet's preparations to launch an attack on Makkah.

[3] On the Day of Resurrection neither your blood-kindred nor your own offspring will avail you.² (On that Day) He will separate you.³ Allah sees all that you do.

[4] You have a good example in Abraham and his companions: they said to their people: "We totally dissociate ourselves from you, and from the deities that you worship instead of Allah. We renounce you⁴ and there has come to be enmity and hatred between us and you until you believe in Allah, the One True God." (But you may not emulate) Abraham's saying to his father: "Certainly I will ask pardon for you, although I have no power over Allah to obtain anything on your behalf."⁵ (And Abraham and his companions prayed): "Our Lord, in You have we put our trust, and to You have we turned, and to You is our ultimate return.

2. Hatib ibn Abi Balta`ah had written this letter to ensure that the members of his family in Makkah remained safe in the event of war. It was, therefore, pointed out: "On the Day of Resurrection neither your blood-kindred nor your own offspring will avail you."

3. This means that all worldly relationships, all ties, all bonds of friendship will be sundered and every person will present himself and render his account in his individual capacity. No one should do anything that is unfair or impermissible in deference to blood kinship, personal friendship or group loyalty for one will have to face the harmful consequences of one's actions in the Hereafter and none will share one's responsibility.

4. That is, the believers renounce them; they neither consider them nor their religious faith to be in the right.

5. In other words, there is an excellent example in Abraham who disavowed his people and broke off relations with them because they disbelieved and associated others with God in His Divinity. This deserves to be emulated. At the same time, one action by Abraham does not merit emulation: namely, his promise to pray for his parents' forgiveness which he later fulfilled.

[5] Our Lord, do not make us a test for the unbelievers,⁶ and forgive us, our Lord. Surely You are Most Mighty, Most Wise.”

[6] Indeed there is a good example for you in them; a good example for anyone who looks forward to Allah and the Last Day. As for him who turns away, Allah is All-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.

[7] It may well be that Allah will implant love between you and those with whom you have had enmity.⁷ Allah is Most Powerful; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

6. There are several ways in which believers can become a test for unbelievers. (1) The unbelievers might establish their dominance over the believers and then claim this to be proof of their being right and of believers being wrong. (2) They may persecute the believers to an unendurable extent with the result that the believers might yield and be ready to compromise their religious faith. (3) The believers, in spite of being representatives of the true faith, should be lacking in the moral excellence that ought to characterise their lives. As a consequence, others might notice in them the flaws that are commonly found in societies rooted in Ignorance. This might provide the unbelievers with an opportunity to claim that the believers' faith had nothing that makes it superior to their unbelief.

7. After asking the Muslims to distance themselves from their unbelieving relatives, they are now being told that a time might come when those same relatives might embrace Islam. If that happens, the strained relations that once prevailed between the Muslims and their unbelieving relatives might be replaced by amity and friendship.

[8] Allah does not forbid that you be kind and just to those who did not fight against you on account of religion, nor drove you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are equitable.⁸

[9] Allah only forbids you to be friends with those who have fought against you on account of religion and who have driven you out of your homes and have abetted in your expulsion. And any who make friends with them, they are the wrong-doers.

[10] Believers, when believing women come to you as Emigrants (in the cause of faith), examine them. Allah fully knows (the truth) concerning their faith. And when you have ascertained them to be believing women, do not send them back to the unbelievers.⁹ Those women are no longer lawful to the unbelievers, nor are those unbelievers lawful to those (believing) women. Give their unbelieving husbands whatever they have spent (as bridal-dues); and there is no offence for you to marry those women if you give them their bridal-dues.¹⁰ Do not hold on to your marriages with unbelieving women: ask for the return of the bridal-due you gave to your unbelieving wives and the unbelievers may ask for the return of

the bridal-due they had given to their believing wives. Such is Allah's command. He judges between you. Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

8. *Justice demands that Muslims should not be inimical to those who have not been inimical to them. Evidently, it is not fair for Muslims to treat their enemies and non-enemies alike. Muslims have a right to be severe with those who opposed them, drove them out of their homes, and thereafter pursued them with hostility simply because they were Muslims. As for those who do not persecute the Muslims, fairness demands that the Muslims too should treat them well and render them the rights that arise from blood kinship or other kinds of fellowship.*

9. *After the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, the Muslim men who fled Makkah for Madinah were sent back to Makkah in deference to the terms of the Treaty. Later, Muslim women also began to arrive in Madinah and the unbelievers demanded that they too should be repatriated. At this stage the question arose as to whether the Treaty also applied to women, God answers the question here, and the essence of the directive that He gives is that if those women were truly Muslims and it was ascertained that they had migrated only for their faith's sake, then they should not be sent back to Makkah. This directive was given because the text of the Treaty, according to a tradition in **Bukhari**, contained the word **rajul** (man), which suggests that the Muslims' commitment to repatriate was confined to the males only.*

10. *This means that a Muslim who wants to marry any of those women should pay a fresh bridal-due. The bridal-due that would be returned to the unbelieving husbands of Muslim women would not, however, dispense with the need for a fresh payment.*

[11] And if you fail to receive from the unbelievers a part of the bridal-due of your disbelieving wives, and then your turn comes, pay to those who have been left on the other side an amount the like of the bridal-due that they have paid. And have fear of Allah in Whom you believe.

[12] O Prophet, when believing women come to you and pledge to you¹¹ that they will not associate aught with Allah in His Divinity, that they will not steal, that they will not commit illicit sexual intercourse, that they will not kill their children, that they will not bring forth a calumny between their hands and feet,¹² and that they will not disobey you in anything known to be good,¹³ then accept their allegiance and ask Allah to forgive them. Surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

11. *This verse was revealed sometime before the conquest of Makkah. Thereafter, the Quraysh started coming to the Prophet (peace be on him) in large numbers to take the oath of allegiance. The Prophet (peace be on him) himself took the oath from men on Mount Safa. As for women, he appointed Umar to administer the oath on his behalf. By this oath, the women were asked to pledge that they would refrain from the things mentioned in this verse. Then, on his return to Madinah the Prophet (peace be on him) asked the Muslim women of that city to gather in a house and sent 'Umar to take the oath from them.*

12. This implies two kinds of calumny: (1) that a woman should accuse another woman of having had unlawful relations with someone and then spreads such rumours around; and (2) that a woman should give birth to a child by someone other than her husband and then assures the latter that the child was his.

13. In this succinct statement two important points of law are enunciated. (1) That obedience even to the Prophet (peace be on him) is limited to "what is known to be good". This despite the fact that there never was any doubt that he would ever order anyone to do anything that was evil. It is evident from this that no one should obey anyone in contravention of God's law. For if obedience even to God's Messenger is contingent upon its being limited to matters "known to be good," who else can claim that people should obey him unconditionally, so that all his commands, laws, rules and practices be necessarily followed even when they are opposed to God 's law? (2) This verse also has a constitutional implication. After laying down five prohibitions, the present verse enjoins only one positive command - to obey the Prophet (peace be on him) in all things that are good. As for evils, mention was made of the main evils in which women of the Time of Ignorance were generally involved, and they were asked to pledge that they would refrain from them. As for good actions, these are neither mentioned here nor was any pledge taken in regard to them. The only pledge that they were required to take was that they would obey the Prophet (peace be on him) in the good actions he enjoined.

[13] Believers, do not make friends with those against whom Allah is wrathful and who are despised of the Hereafter, as despised as are the unbelievers lying in their graves.