

MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

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Surah An-Nisa—cont....

(Ayaat 101-115, inclusive)

Translator's Note:

For the sake of continuity and coherent explanation, most of the general discourse has been made by employing the 'male' as a prototype, which is in no way meant to be diminutive of the opposite gender or to disrespect the status of women.

Moreover, each verse (Ayah) has been kept as a continuum in order to prevent the misrepresentation of meanings, which may occur when the verses are broken up and the translation of those verses becomes kaput when done in bits and pieces.

Cross-references taken from other parts of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) are provided in italics.

The Translation of the Holy Qur'an done by the Message International – USA (www.FreeQuran.com) and edited by Saheeh International – UK, Dar Al Mountada – Saudi Arabia and Al Qummah – Egypt has been used in order to synchronize the use of modern English Language, which we believe will give a more accomplished sense of understanding to Today's mind.

Recap from the previous issue: verses 88 – 100:

The reader would recall that we had concluded our previous translation and elucidation of Surah An-Nisa (Women) at verse 100. The underlying message of those 13 verses was a continuation of the charge sheet against the wicked and preposterous claims and deeds of the Munafiqun (hypocrites) and the Mushrikun (Polytheists).

The verses also dealt with the case of banished Jews who were showing a hostile and menacing attitude, in spite of the peace treaties they had made with the Muslims. They were openly siding with the enemies of Islam and hatching plots against the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the Muslim Community even at Al-Madinah itself. They were taken to task for their inimical behaviour and given a final warning to change their attitude and as we know from historical accounts, finally exiled from Madinah on account of their misconduct.

The problem of the hypocrites, who had become very troublesome at that time, was causing immense difficulties for the Believers. The hypocrites were, therefore, divided into different categories to enable the Muslims to deal with them appropriately.

Clear instructions were also given regarding the attitude they should adopt towards the non-belligerent clans. The most important thing needed at that time was to prepare the Muslims for the bitter struggle with the opponents of Islam. For this purpose greatest importance was attached to their character building, for it was obvious that the small Muslim Community could only come out successful, nay, survive, if the Muslims possessed high moral character. They were, therefore, enjoined to adopt the highest moral qualities and were severely criticized whenever any moral weakness was detected in them.

Furthermore, the verses informed the ignominy and ordeal that awaited the hypocrites both in this world and particularly in the Hereafter, viz., the torment of Hellfire.

Fresh Exposition: verses 101 through 115 of Surah An-Nisa.

Verse 101

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ ۖ إِنَّ خِفَتُمْ أَنْ يُفْتِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۗ إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا أَعْدَاؤُكُمْ مُبِينِينَ ۝

“When you go forth journeying in the land, there is no blame on you if you shorten the Prayer, (especially) if you fear that the unbelievers might cause you harm. Surely the unbelievers are your open enemies.”

Shortening Prayers (qasr) while travelling in peace-time consists of praying two rak'ahs at those appointed times when one is normally required to pray four rak'ahs. The form of qasr during a state of war has not been specified. Prayers should, therefore, be performed as circumstances permit. People should pray in congregation if possible, otherwise individually. If it is not possible to turn towards the qiblah, one may keep the direction in which one happens to be facing. One may even pray while seated either on the back of an animal or on a vehicle. If actual bowing and prostrating are not possible, they may be performed with hand signals. If absolutely necessary, one may even pray while walking. One may also pray even though one's clothes are soiled with blood. If, in spite of these relaxations, a man still fails to manage to perform a Prayer within the prescribed time, he may defer it, following the precedent set by the Prophet (SAW) during the Battle of Trench.

There is jurisprudential disagreement regarding details of Qasr prayer, which is out of the scope of our exposition. What is, however relevant to this treatise is the Qur'anic expression in the verse 'there shall be no blame', which also occurs in the Qur'anic verse on the ritual of running between Safa and Marwah (*Al-Baqarah: 158*). The actual words used in both verses apparently mean that these acts were not blameworthy even though the running, as we know, is part of the prescribed rites of Pilgrimage and is obligatory: We can appreciate the significance of both these Qur'anic verses if we remember that the purpose in each case is to dispel the misunderstanding that the acts concerned might either entail some sin or jeopardize a man's reward.

Verse 102

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقِمْ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ وَذَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذَى مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

“(O Messenger!) If you are amongst the believers and rise (in the state of war) to lead the Prayer for them, let a party of them stand

with you to worship, keeping their arms. When they have performed their prostration, let them go behind you, and let another party who have not prayed, pray with you, remaining on guard and keeping their arms, for the unbelievers love to see you heedless of your arms and your baggage so that they might swoop upon you in a surprise attack. But there shall be no blame upon you if you were to lay aside your arms if you are either troubled by rain or are sick; but remain on guard. Surely Allah has prepared a humiliating chastisement for the unbelievers."

This injunction regarding Prayer in a state of either fear or insecurity (salat al-khawf) refers to the time when an enemy attack is anticipated, but the fighting has not yet begun. Regardless of the jurisprudential difference of opinion regarding Prayer during war (when the war has begun) it is an established fact that on four occasions during the Battle of Trench the Prophet (SAW) missed Prayers during the appointed times, but performed them subsequently in their correct sequence, even though the above-mentioned injunction regarding Prayer in the state of insecurity had already been revealed.

Moreover, the actual form of congregational Prayer in the state of insecurity depends, to a large extent, on the actual state of the hostilities. The Prophet (SAW) prayed variedly under different conditions. A Muslim commander may use due discretion and adopt whichever form of Prayer, mentioned in the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), he deems appropriately suited to the situational need.

The verse also emphasizes the fact that due precautions ought to be taken by the Muslim army while Praying during war, as the enemy would be waiting for a chink in the Muslim Army's armour to appear and apparently that may well happen if the whole army becomes oblivious of their weapons and turns towards Prayer simultaneously. Having said that, it must be emphasized that victory and defeat in wars ultimately depends on the Will of Allah (SWT). Therefore, even while taking these precautionary measures one should feel sure that He (SWT) will humiliate those who are trying to extinguish His (SWT) light.

Verse 103

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَىٰ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا ۝

“When you have finished the Prayer, remember Allah -standing, and sitting, and reclining. And when you become secure, perform the regular Prayer. The Prayer is enjoined upon the believers at stated times.”

This verse, although self-explanatory to a degree, needs the mention of two important points:

- 1- Even during a time as trying as war, the remembrance of Allah (SWT) is of paramount importance and the key to achieving His (SWT) bounty and victory. The same holds valid in times of peace.
- 2- Once the war has ended and Muslim army is secure from fear of the enemy, Prayers ought to be performed according to the normal routine at the prescribed times of the day/night.

Verse 104

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ ۚ إِن تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ۚ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝

“Do not be faint of heart in pursuing these people: if you happen to suffer harm they too are suffering just as you are, while you may hope from Allah what they cannot hope for. Allah is All-Knowing, All- Wise.”

This verse refers to those unbelievers who adamantly opposed the cause of Islam and the establishment of the Islamic order.

It is not a matter of astonishment that men of faith are required to endure the same degree of hardship for the sake of the Truth as unbelievers do for the sake of falsehood, and then some. This is true because, as the latter merely seek the transient benefits of worldly life whereas the faithful seek to please, and secure the proximity of the Lord of the Universe and look forward to everlasting rewards.

Verse 105

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَا تَكُنُ لِلْخَائِبِينَ خَصِيمًا ۝

“(O Messenger!) We have revealed to you this Book with the Truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. So do not dispute on behalf of the dishonest,”

These and certain other verses addressing the same subject matter that occur a little later on in the same Surah (verses 113 onward) and relate to an incident that took place around the time they were revealed. In effect, the verses act as an advocate in proclaiming that Justice and Truth are the cornerstones of a vibrant Islamic System. The incident involved a person of the Banu Zafar tribe of the Ansar, who stole another Ansari's armoured coat of chain mail. While the investigation was in progress, he put the coat of mail in the house of a Jew. Its owner approached the Prophet (SAW) and expressed his suspicion about this man (identified as one named Tu'mah in some commentaries). But Tu'mah, his kinsmen and many of the Banu Zafar colluded to ascribe the guilt to the Jew. When the Jew concerned was asked about the matter he pleaded that he was not guilty. Tu'mah's supporters, on the other hand, waged a vigorous propaganda campaign to save Tu'mah's skin. They argued that the wicked Jew, who had denied the Truth and disbelieved in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), was absolutely untrustworthy, and his statement ought to be rejected outright. The Prophet (SAW) was about to decide the case against the Jew on the established formal grounds of visible evidence and sworn testimony, when the whole matter was laid bare by a revelation from Allah (SWT).

It is obvious that the Prophet's (SAW) judgement would have been in good faith based on the evidence available, but it would have provided the enemies of Islam an effective weapon against the Prophet (SAW) as well as against the entire Islamic community, and even Islam itself. They could have spread the word that the Prophet (SAW) and his followers were not concerned about right and justice: it would have been claimed that they were guilty of the same prejudice

and chauvinism against which they had themselves been preaching. It was specifically to prevent this situation that Allah (SWT) intervened in this particular case.

In this and the following verses Muslims were strongly censured for supporting criminals for no reason other than either family or tribal solidarity and were told that they should not allow prejudice to interfere with the principle of equal justice for all.

Verse 106

وَأَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“and seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”

This verse may be seen as a continuation of the previous one or as a stand-alone message. Either way, it is self-explanatory.

Verse 107

وَلَا تَجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا

“Do not plead for those who are dishonest to themselves; Allah does not love him who betrays trust and persists in sin.”

Whoever commits a breach of trust with others in fact starts by committing a breach of trust with his self. For the powers of his head and heart have been placed by Allah (SWT) at his disposal as a sacred trust, and by misusing them he is forcing those powers to support him in acts which involve a breach of trust. In doing so the person concerned suppresses his conscience, which Allah (SWT) has placed as a sentinel over his moral conduct, with the result that it is rendered incapable of preventing him from acts of wrong and iniquity. It is only after a man has already carried out this cruel suppression of conscience within himself that he is able to commit acts of sin and injustice on a regular basis outwardly, with no remorse. Acts of wrong committed involuntarily in the heat of the moment are a separate issue and excluded from the exposition of this verse. Moreover, acts of sin that are followed by guilt, remorse and eventual repentance are dealt with at other places in the Holy Book.

Verse 108

يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۖ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ۝

“They can hide (their deeds) from men but they cannot hide (them) from Allah for He is with them even when they hold nightly counsels that are displeasing to Allah. Allah encompasses all their doings.”

The style of the verse gives an indication that it is general in the sense that no deed of man is hidden from Allah (SWT), the Omniscient, the Omnipresent; it does however apply ever so accurately on the routinely sinful deeds of hypocrites, who tried to hide their true identity and their evil actions from the people so that they could be immune from general criticism. The verse reveals that actions were not hidden from Allah (SWT) who knew all their plots and secrets and He (SWT) was always with them even when they used to plot and scheme at night in secret meetings, which Allah (SWT) has disapproved of.

Verse 109

هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤَآءَ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُجَادِلُ اللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ۝

“You pleaded on their behalf in this worldly life but who will plead with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be their defender there?”

Continuing the subject from the previous verse, Allah (SWT) criticizes the hypocrites that even though they can get decisions in their favour in this world by lying and betraying the Muslims, since the believers plead in their favour according to what is apparent to them, but how will anyone be able to plead for them with Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment, as He (SWT) knows everything and nothing is hidden from Him.

Verse 110

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ۝

“He who does either evil or wrongs himself, and then asks for the forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”

Even though they (the hypocrites) have committed great sins, yet Allah's (SWT) mercy is far greater than that and thus those who sincerely feel remorse and repent afterwards, Allah (SWT) assures them of His (SWT) forgiveness. In other words, those who do evil or wrong their own souls but later feel guilty and sincerely seek the pardon of Allah (SWT) will find Him Forgiving and Merciful.

Verse 111

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ ۖ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝

“He who commits a sin, commits it only to his detriment. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

The verse teaches a vital lesson to mankind, i.e., no one shall bear the burden of another and every soul will be responsible for its own deeds. The fruition of that sin may come to haunt him in this world, but the real punishment is that of the Hereafter. This, of course holds valid when death overtakes the repentance from sins. The rest of the verse is oft-repeated and self-explanatory.

Verses 112 & 113

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ۝

“But he who commits either a fault or a sin, and then casts it upon an innocent person, lays upon himself the burden of a false charge and a flagrant sin.”

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ ۖ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّونَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ۖ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ۝

“(O Messenger!) But for Allah's favour and mercy upon you, a party of them had resolved to mislead you, yet they only misled themselves, and could not have harmed you in any way. Allah revealed to you the Book and Wisdom, and He taught you what you knew not. Great indeed has been Allah's favour upon you.”

Verses 112 and 113 are intertwined and need to be addressed as a pair.

Even if some people succeeded in their design to obtain from the Prophet (SAW) a judgement in their favour by presenting a false account of events, the real loss would have been theirs rather than the Prophet's (SAW). For the real criminals in the sight of Allah (SWT) are the perpetrators of that fraud and not the Prophet (SAW) who, in good faith, had delivered a verdict that was based on the evidence presented but actually did not conform to the facts. Whoever obtains a judgement in his favour by tricking the courts deludes his self into believing that by such tricks he can bring right to his side; but Allah (SWT) has ordained that right remains with its true claimant regardless of judgements obtained by fraud and deception.

Verse 114

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۖ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ۝

“Most of their secret conferring are devoid of good, unless one secretly enjoins in charity, good deeds, and setting the affairs of men right. We shall grant who ever does that seeking to please Allah a great reward.”

In this verse Allah (SWT) commands His servants not to hold secret counsels amongst themselves of vain talk and may well lead to disobedience, rather they should exhibit openness in their actions and consultations. If, however, the cause and intent for secrecy is noble; such as non-obligatory charity (Sadaqah), good and righteous deeds which Allah (SWT) has ordained or bringing conciliation between two parties, Islam permits due secrecy. In fact Allah (SWT) promises rich rewards for such actions provided that they were done only for the pleasure of Allah (SWT) and the good of people in general; not for worldly benefits.

Verse 115

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ۝

“As for him who sets himself against the Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers even after true guidance had

And Allah (SWT) Knows Best!

