

# Tafseer Surah Al-Tahrim (التحریم)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Qur'an  
(Additional Sources Used as Well)

By Rameez Abid

## Introduction

- I. This *surah* begins with a personal incident that occurred during the Prophet's (pbuh) life in his own household. There are two opinions as to the exact nature of the incident:
  - A. It relates to honey
    1. Aishah said that the Messenger of Allah used to stay with Zainab bint Jahsh and drink honey at her house. Hafsa and I agreed that if the Prophet entered upon either of us, she would say: "I perceive the smell of *Maghafir* (a bad-smelling gum) on you; have you eaten *Maghafir*?" He came in to one of them and she said that to him. He said: "**No, rather I drank honey at the house of Zainab bint Jahsh, but I will never do it again!**" Then the following was revealed: 'O Prophet! Why do you prohibit 'yourself' from what Allah has made lawful to you' until the verse 'It will be better' if you 'wives' both turn to Allah in repentance' about Aishah and Hafsa, 'Remember' when the Prophet had 'once' confided something to one of his wives' refers to him (pbuh) saying: "**No, rather I drank honey.**" [Nasa'i 3958]
  - B. It relates to his slave-girl Maria
    1. Umar said that the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, entered the house of Hafsa along with the mother of his son, Maria. When Hafsa found him with her, she said: 'Why did you bring her in my house? You did this to me, to the exception of all your wives, only because I am too insignificant to you'. He said to her: 'Do not mention this to Aishah; she is forbidden for me [i.e. Maria] if I ever touch her'. Hafsa said: 'How could she be forbidden for you when she is your slave-girl?' He swore to her that he will not touch her and then said: 'Do not mention this incident to anyone'. But she went ahead and informed Aishah [Wahidi]
- II. Due to the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) was being watched very closely by his followers, he is told in this *surah* to not make things forbidden for himself, which Allah has made permissible, because others will want to follow him unnecessarily in it and start thinking that it is part of the religion
- III. This *surah* is called *Tahrim* (the prohibition) because it mentions the incident in which the Prophet (pbuh) forbade something for himself which Allah had permitted [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

# Tafseer of the Verses

1. **O Prophet! Why do you prohibit `yourself` from what Allah has made lawful to you, seeking to please your wives? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**
  - a. This shows that the Prophet (pbuh) was very accommodating towards his wives and would strive to make them pleased
  - b. The last part of the verse indicates that Allah forgave the Prophet (pbuh) and removed the blame from him [Sa'di]
  - c. It is as if the Prophet (pbuh) is being told that it is his wives that should be striving and seeking to please him and not the other way around. The high status of his wives is only because of their marriage to the Prophet (pbuh) [Sabuni]
2. **Allah has already ordained for you `believers` the way to absolve yourselves from your oaths. For Allah is your Guardian. And He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.**
  - a. The Prophet (pbuh) had made an oath to never eat honey/be with Maria again so he is being told to break the oath and pay the expiation for it
    - i. The Prophet (pbuh) is also being told that Allah will take care of his affairs and is his helper [Sabuni]
    - ii. We can also take from this that we are being told to not put unnecessary difficult conditions on ourselves, especially those we will not be able to maintain, just in order to please our spouses. This usually leads to other marital problems in the future as well between the couple
  - b. At the end, we are told that Allah is All-Knowing about His creation's affairs and All-Wise in His legislation [Sabuni]
    - i. He also knows our individual circumstances and what is best for us [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
3. **`Remember` when the Prophet had `once` confided something to one of his wives, then when she disclosed it `to another wife` and Allah made it known to him, he presented `to her` part of what was disclosed and overlooked a part. So when he informed her of it, she exclaimed, "Who told you this?" He replied, "I was informed by the All-Knowing, All-Aware."**
  - a. This is when the Prophet (pbuh) told his wife Hafsa a secret and asked her to keep it hidden but she went and informed Aisha about it. Then Allah informed the Prophet (pbuh) that the secret had been disclosed so he confronted Hafsa, who asked him how he came to know about it? So the Prophet (pbuh) told her that Allah informed him because nothing is hidden from Him and that He is All-Knowing of everything
    - i. When the Prophet (pbuh) confronted Hafsa, he only told her part of the secret that she had disclosed and not all of it. He did this out of modesty and kindness. The Prophet (pbuh) was very furious with his wives after this incident and boycotted them for a month [Sabuni]
  - b. We also learn from this that spouses should keep private matters within the home and should not disclose them to outsiders [Sabuni]

- i. This is especially true if one of the spouses specifically asked the other to keep something a secret [My comment]
- 4. **‘It will be better’ if you ‘wives’ both turn to Allah in repentance, for your hearts have certainly faltered. But if you ‘continue to’ collaborate against him, then ‘know that’ Allah Himself is his Guardian. And Gabriel, the righteous believers, and the angels are ‘all’ his supporters as well.**
  - a. Due to the fact that disharmony within the home can negatively effect what happens outside, Allah takes over the conversation
  - b. The hearts of the two wives deviated from the truth when they behaved in that manner, thus, they are being ordered to repent for causing the Prophet (pbuh) sadness by making him forbid something permissible for himself in order to please them [Sabuni]
  - c. The wives needed to be reminded that the Prophet (pbuh) is not like other husbands. He is a prophet of Allah, which means he deserves a level of respect and honor unparalleled with others
    - i. This is why Allah reminded them as to who are the Prophet’s (pbuh) supporters if they continued rallying against him in this manner
      - 1. The ‘righteous believers’ in the verse is in reference to Abu Bakr and Umar [Baghawi]
        - a. Abu Bakr is the father of Aisha and Umar is the father of Hafsa
- 5. **Perhaps, if he were to divorce you ‘all’, his Lord would replace you with better wives who are submissive ‘to Allah and His Messenger’, faithful ‘to Him’, devout, repentant, dedicated to worship and fasting—previously married or virgins.**
  - a. This is meant to scare the Prophet’s (pbuh) wives
  - b. This verse includes qualities which every Muslim woman should strive to acquire
    - i. It also tells us that mothers of the believers (i.e. prophet’s wives) should have such qualities, otherwise, Allah will replace them with wives better than them who will have such qualities. The prophet’s wives were not replaced because they continued to have these qualities
  - c. We also learn from this verse that the Prophet (pbuh) did not marry for lustful purposes but for His sake and pleasure [Sabuni]
- 6. **O believers! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, overseen by formidable and severe angels, who never disobey whatever Allah orders—always doing as commanded.**
  - a. The believers are being addressed directly because they are not safe from the hellfire just because they believe, rather, they must actively engage in doing actions which will save them and their families from the hellfire
  - b. The verse also tells us that we need to worry about ourselves first and then our families. If we ourselves are not abiding by Allah’s commands, then we cannot expect our families to follow suit. We should be striving to better ourselves and our families on a constant basis
    - i. We should have honest and open discussions with our families about the afterlife, paradise, hellfire, worship, servitude to Allah, etc.

- ii. We should never give up on our families, even when they seem distant from religion, but should keep trying to give them *da'wah* and encouraging them to live according to His laws
    - 1. We should also continue to supplicate for them and ask Allah to guide them to the straight path
  - c. The 'people' are mentioned first because there will be more people than stones in the hellfire kindling it
  - d. The angels overlooking the hellfire are insensitive and intense. They do not disobey Allah's command, under any circumstances, to severely torture and punish hell's inhabitants
    - i. They do not even think about it but do it immediately without delay or slack
    - ii. They do not have an atom's weight of mercy in their hearts because they were created that way. They love and take pleasure in punishing the disbelievers and sinners in hell [Sabuni]
- 7. "O disbelievers! Make no excuses this Day! You are only rewarded for what you used to do."**
- a. This is the only verse in the Qur'an which directly addresses the disbelievers by name
  - b. This verse is mentioned in the context of speaking to believers to warn them of the punishments of hell [Ibn 'Ashoor]
    - i. The excuses given by the disbelievers will be of no benefit to them on the Day of Judgment because they are only being punished for their own sins and crimes, thus, they are not being wronged in any way [Sabuni]
  - c. This will be said to them when the angels are casting them into hell [Alusi]
- 8. O believers! Turn to Allah in sincere repentance, perhaps your Lord may absolve you of your sins and admit you into Gardens, under which rivers flow, on the Day Allah will not disgrace the Prophet or the believers with him. Their light will shine ahead of them and on their right. They will say, "Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us. 'For' You are truly Most Capable of everything."**
- a. The believers are now being told to make a sincere life-changing repentance to Allah and get their act together
    - i. A sincere repentance is when a person repents to Allah for a sin and does not return back to it again
      - 1. Imam Qurtubi said it involves four things [Baghawi]:
        - a. Seek forgiveness with the tongue
        - b. Body's departure from the sin
        - c. Firm commitment in the heart to not return back to the sin
        - d. Leave evil friends
          - i. Because bad influences can encourage the person to return to the sin [My comment]
  - b. The word 'perhaps' is used because they have not yet made a sincere repentance

- i. Some also have stated that whenever Allah uses ‘perhaps’, it means it is a guarantee. So here it means that those who sincerely repent to Allah will definitely be shown mercy by Him and admitted into paradise [Sabuni]
- c. Allah then tells us that He will not disgrace the Prophet (pbuh) and his believing followers in front of the disbelievers, rather, they will be honored by Him [Sabuni]
- d. The ‘light’ spoken of will be due to their faith and righteous actions in this life. It will light up for them when they cross the bridge over hell. It will illuminate all around them. The hypocrites will be made to lose their light on the bridge. When the believers witness this, they will make the supplication, “*Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us. ‘For’ You are truly Most Capable of everything*” [Sabuni]
  - i. The strength of each believer’s light will be in accordance to his/her level of faith and righteous deeds. For some, their light will illuminate miles in front of them while for others only a short distance from their feet
  - ii. The hypocrites are those who pretended to be believers in this life from the outside but disbelieved in their hearts

**9. O Prophet! Struggle against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm with them. Hell will be their home. What an evil destination!**

- a. Now, Allah is commanding the Prophet (pbuh) to do *jihad* against the enemies of Allah among the disbelievers and hypocrites. The former are waged *jihad* against using weapons, whereas, the latter through tongue using evidence and proofs because they blend in with the Muslims and pretend to be among them [Sabuni]
  - i. Some also said that *jihad* against the hypocrites is by implementing *hudoos* punishments against them [Ibn Kathir]
    - 1. Most of the *hudoos* punishments during the Prophet’s (pbuh) lifetime were implemented against the hypocrites because it was they who used to commit major sins that have *hudoos* punishments attached to them [Alusi and Razi]
- b. To ‘be firm with them’ means to be severe with them in reproach and use rough speech if kindness reaches its limit [Sabuni and Alusi]
  - i. It could also be said that the Prophet (pbuh) is being told to be firm with the disbelievers while in battle with them and against the hypocrites when implementing *hudoos* punishments on them for their sins or when establishing proofs against them with the tongue [Razi]

**10. Allah sets forth an example for the disbelievers: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. Each was married to one of Our righteous servants, yet betrayed them. So their husbands were of no benefit to them against Allah whatsoever. Both were told, “Enter the Fire, along with the others!”**

- a. We are being given examples of two women who were married to prophets but that did not save them from Allah’s punishment because they betrayed them through disbelief and lack of faith. Family connections have no value in the afterlife if someone lacks belief and good deeds

- i. The example teaches us that a woman can be in the best company but may still go astray
- ii. Some erroneously think that the betrayal of the wives was that they committed adultery but this is not true, rather, it was disbelief and a lack of faith as Ibn Abbas pointed out [Sabuni]

**11. And Allah sets forth an example for the believers: the wife of Pharaoh, who prayed, “My Lord! Build me near You a house in Paradise, deliver me from Pharaoh and his ‘evil’ doing, and save me from the wrongdoing people.”**

- a. Now we are being given the opposite example from the previous verse
  - i. The example teaches us that a woman can be in the worst company but may still have strong faith in Allah
- b. This is in reference to Aisya, who was married to Pharaoh and had adopted Prophet Musa (pbuh) as a child
  - i. It is reported that when Prophet Musa (pbuh) defeated the magicians and arose against the Pharaoh, Asiya believed him. When the Pharaoh found out, he wanted to kill her [Sabuni]
  - ii. She had everything she could want from this world but chose to believe in Allah and follow the right guidance. She was punished for it severely by the Pharaoh but did not care and continued to believe until the end. This is what happens when someone tastes the sweetness of faith, no other desire or threat can replace it afterwards
- c. She supplicated to Allah to build a home for her in paradise near Him and to be saved from the disbelief of Pharaoh and his tyranny. What is amazing about her supplication is that she requests to be near Allah first and then mentions the house! [Sabuni]

**12. ‘There is’ also ‘the example of’ Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrân, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her ‘womb’ through Our angel ‘Jibra’eel’. She believed in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was one of the ‘sincerely’ devout.**

- a. Mary is an example of a woman who is good herself and is in good company
- b. The phrase ‘guarded her chastity’ implies that Mary did not commit fornication [as the Jews falsely allege]. Allah sent the angel Jibra’eel to breathe into her so that she became pregnant with Prophet Eesa (pbuh) [Sabuni]
  - i. By the power of Allah, she conceived Prophet Eesa (pbuh) without a father [Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]
- c. We are also told that one of the qualities of Mary was that she believed in the laws of Allah and the revealed books. She was also very devout, which means she was obedient to Allah by complying with His commands and abstaining from His prohibitions [Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]
  - i. She had thoroughly studied the revealed books