

Tafseer Surah Al-Mumtahanah

Introduction

- I. Purpose of the *surah*
 - A. Liberating the hearts of the believers from loyalty to other than the religion of Allah [al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]
 - B. Warning the believers against befriending the enemies and alerting them to the opportunity the enemies seize to harm them. Also emphasizing that the bonds of kinship between them and the polytheists should not be relied upon when it comes to enmity in matters of faith [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]
 - C. The obligation of examining the believing women who migrate and explaining the consequences of this examination if their faith is confirmed. Also, the ruling on allegiance of migrating believing women and its conditions [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]
- II. Background of this *surah*
 - A. The reason for the revelation of these verses is the story of Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah, when the Prophet ﷺ was making preparations for the conquest of Makkah. Hatib wrote a letter to Quraysh, informing them that the Prophet ﷺ was going to head towards Makkah, so that they would owe him a favor, not because of any doubt or hypocrisy on his part but to protect his family in case things do not go well. And he sent that letter through a woman. The Prophet ﷺ was told about what he had done by Allah, so he sent people to catch up with the woman before she reached Makkah and take the letter from her. He rebuked Hatib, who apologized, and the Prophet ﷺ accepted his apology

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **O believers! Do not take My enemies and yours as trusted allies, showing them affection even though they deny what has come to you of the truth. They drove the Messenger and yourselves out of Mecca, simply for your belief in Allah, your Lord. If you truly emigrated to struggle in My cause and seek My pleasure, then do not take them as allies, disclosing secrets of the believers to the pagans out of affection for them, when I know best whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal. And whoever of you does this has truly strayed from the Right Way.**
 - a. Meaning O you who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and act upon His legislation, do not take my enemies and your enemies as allies and beloved friends, showing them affection, while you inform them of the news of the Messenger ﷺ and the secrets of the Muslims [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]
 - b. Allah is telling the believers how can they want to ally themselves with these enemies when they literally kicked them out of their land [i.e. Mecca] for simply believing in Allah [Sabuni]
 - i. They do not consider the bonds of kinship nor blood in your regard simply

because of your faith [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

- c. Then Allah says if you have truly migrated, striving in His cause, seeking His pleasure, then do not befriend His enemies and your enemies, showing them affection secretly [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]
 - d. The phrase '*I know best whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal*' means there is no point in trying to send secret messages to the enemy because Allah will know. In this there is reprimand, threat, and warning [Sabuni]
 - i. How can you show friendship to these disbelievers in secret and conceal it, when you know that Allah knows what you conceal and what you disclose? Even if it is hidden from the believers, it cannot be hidden from Allah [Sa'di]
 - e. The last part of the verse means that whoever loves and befriends the enemies of Allah, then he has erred from the path of faith and paradise [Sabuni]
 - i. Because he has followed the path that is contrary to Islamic teaching, reason and human dignity [Sa'di]
 - f. Then Allah explains the extent of their enmity, so as to urge the believers to regard them as enemies [Sa'di]
- 2. If they gain the upper hand over you, they would be your 'open' enemies, unleashing their hands and tongues to harm you, and wishing that you would abandon faith.**
- a. Meaning if they get their chance, they will disclose the enmity they harbor in their hearts towards you and will stretch their hands out to you to harm and beat you [or kill you], while swearing and abusing you with their tongues. They will also desire that you disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger so that you become just like them [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. Therefore, affection towards them would be a great mistake and will cause harm [to you] in the world and the religion [Sabuni]
- 3. Neither your relatives nor children will benefit you on Judgment Day—He will decide between you 'all'. For Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.**
- a. Meaning your kinship and your children will be of no benefit to you when you align yourselves with the disbelievers for their sake. On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will distinguish between you, admitting the people of obedience into Paradise and consigning the people of disobedience to the Fire. Allah is fully aware of what you do; nothing of your words or deeds is hidden from Him and He will soon requite you for them [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar* and *al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- 4. You already have an excellent example in Ibrahim and those with him, when they said to their people, "We totally dissociate ourselves from you and 'shun' whatever 'idols' you worship besides Allah. We reject you. The enmity and hatred that has arisen between us and you will last until you believe in Allah alone." The only exception is when Abraham said to his father, "I will seek forgiveness for you," adding, "but I cannot protect you from Allah at all." 'The believers prayed,' "Our Lord! In You we trust. And to You we 'always' turn. And to You is the final return.**
- a. Example of Ibrahim is given because we have been commanded to follow his religion. He and his believing followers disavowed their people who were worshipping others

besides Allah [Sa'di]

- i. When it became clear to Ibrahim and his companions that their disbelieving nation had reached a point of no return, they completely disassociated themselves from them
- b. Seeking to emulate Ibrahim's act of seeking forgiveness for his [polytheist] father is not applicable [to us so we do not follow him in that]. This is because Ibrahim did so before it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of Allah. Once it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of Allah, he disassociated himself from him [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]
 - i. Hence, we should not pray for the polytheists and claim that by doing so we are following the path of Ibrahim, for Allah has told us of Ibrahim's excuse for doing that in the verse, "As for Ibrahim's prayer for his father's forgiveness, it was only in fulfillment of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to Ibrahim that his father was an enemy of Allah, he broke ties with him" (Qur'an 9:114) [Sa'di]
- c. We also have a good example in Ibrahim and those who were with him when they called upon Allah, put their trust in Him, turned to Him and acknowledged their helplessness and shortcomings [Sa'di]
 - i. The meaning of their supplication is, "O our Lord! Upon You we rely in all our affairs, to You we return in repentance, and to you is our return on the Day of Judgement" [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

5. Our Lord! Do not make us a trial for the disbelievers. Forgive us, our Lord! You 'alone' are truly the Almighty, All-Wise.

- a. Meaning do not give disbelievers power over us for our sins, so that they persecute us and prevent us as much as they can from practicing our faith, which would cause them further confusion, for if they see that they have the upper hand, they will think that they are following the right path and that we are following the wrong path, and they will increase in disbelief and tyranny [Sa'di]
- b. Some interpreted it to mean that do not make our bad behavior as a way of people not accepting Islam
 - i. There are a lot of people today who are turned off by Islam because of how Muslims behave
- c. Allah is Almighty who can never be overpowered and Wise in His creation, legislation and decree [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- d. Then Allah reiterates the encouragement to follow the example of Ibrahim and his followers [Sa'di]

6. You certainly have an excellent example in them for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day. But whoever turns away, then surely Allah 'alone' is the Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

- a. It is not made easy for everyone to follow this example; rather it is only made easy for those who look with hope to Allah and the Last Day [Sa'di]
 - i. Having faith and seeking reward makes it easy for a person to face every difficult

thing, makes him think little of all that he does, and makes him steadfast in following the example of the righteous slaves of Allah and the prophets [Sa'di]

- b. And whoever turns away from obeying Allah and following the example of His Messengers only harms himself; he does not harm Allah in the slightest [Sa'di]
 - i. Those who turn away from this good example [of Ibrahim and his followers by not allying with the enemies of Allah], then Allah is in no need of His servants. He does not require their obedience [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- c. Allah is completely independent of means in all aspects, so He has no need of anyone among His creation at all and He is worthy of praise in every situation [Sa'di and *al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]
- d. The Arabic word '*hameed*' in the verse refers to something that is praiseworthy in and of itself even if nobody else is around to praise it, perhaps this is why Allah used it to refer to Himself

7. 'In time,' Allah may bring about goodwill between you and those of them you 'now' hold as enemies. For Allah is Most Capable. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

- a. Meaning Allah will bring about affection between you, O believers, and those disbelievers whom you oppose by guiding them to Islam and they will become your brothers in religion. Allah has power to turn their hearts to faith [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. This actualized at the end of the Prophet's ﷺ life at the Conquest of Mecca when people started to accept Islam in large droves from Mecca. The hate they had previously turned into love [Sabuni]
- b. Allah does not regard any sin as being too great to forgive, or any fault as being too big for Him to conceal [Sa'di]

8. Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and fairly with those who have neither fought nor driven you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are fair.

- a. Meaning we can have good communal relationships with those who are not our enemies. We can deal with them kindly and justly. Only those who show animosity towards us or our religion, solely due to our faith, we can also show it towards them
- b. When the previous verses - which urge the believers to regard the disbelievers as enemies - were revealed, the believers paid complete attention and complied with these instructions in the most perfect manner, and they refrained, for fear of sin, from upholding ties with some of their polytheist relatives, thinking that this was included in what Allah had forbidden. Therefore Allah told them here that this was not included in the prohibition. Allah does not forbid you to show kindness, uphold ties, and to be fair and just towards the polytheists among your relatives and others, if they are not involved in waging war against you or driving you out of your homes [Sa'di]
- c. Some mentioned that this verse was revealed due to Asma bint Abu Bakr. Her polytheist mother came from Mecca to visit her after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and brought a gift. However, Asma refused to allow her inside the home or accept her gift. She consulted the Prophet ﷺ and this verse was revealed as a response, so the Prophet ﷺ commanded her to be kind towards her mother [Sabuni]

- d. Allah loves those who act with fairness and justice in their words and actions [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

9. Allah only forbids you from befriending those who have fought you for ‘your’ faith, driven you out of your homes, or supported ‘others’ in doing so. And whoever takes them as friends, then it is they who are the ‘true’ wrongdoers.

- a. This further clarifies that the judgment is not generic for all non-Muslims but only those who do wrong towards Muslims and show animosity towards them due to their religion
- b. Those who take [such] disbelievers as supporters over the believers, they are indeed wronging themselves. They have gone beyond the limits set by Allah [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]
 - i. They wrong themselves by bringing themselves to the point of destruction on account of their going against Allah’s instruction and inviting Allah’s anger and punishment [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer* and Sabuni]
- c. Such disbelievers should neither be shown friendship nor support in word and deed [Sa’di]
- d. As for [general] acts of kindness and generosity that do not come under the heading of taking the polytheists as allies, Allah does not forbid you to do that. Rather that comes under the general heading of the command to show kindness to relatives, other humans and other creatures [Sa’di]

10. O believers! When the believing women come to you as emigrants, test their intentions—their faith is best known to Allah—and if you find them to be believers, then do not send them back to the disbelievers. These ‘women’ are not lawful ‘wives’ for the disbelievers, nor are the disbelievers lawful ‘husbands’ for them. ‘But’ repay the disbelievers whatever ‘dowries’ they had paid. And there is no blame on you if you marry these ‘women’ as long as you pay them their dowries. And do not hold on to marriage with polytheistic women. ‘But’ demand ‘repayment of’ whatever ‘dowries’ you had paid, and let the disbelievers do the same. That is the judgment of Allah—He judges between you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

- a. According to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, those who chose to migrate to Mecca would not be returned to Muslims in Medina, but Meccan pagans who accepted Islam and migrated to Medina would be returned to Mecca. However, the policy did not mention what would happen to women as it only included men. Then some women from Mecca showed up to Medina wanting to accept Islam so this verse is telling the believers not to send them back to Mecca
 - i. Allah told the believers to test these women through interrogation to assure that their intentions are sound and that they truly are migrating to be believers and not for some other ill purpose like spying on Muslims for the Meccans or for some other worldly aim like marriage
 - 1. If they were insincere, it became a must to send them back, in accordance with the terms of the treaty, provided that doing so would not lead to negative consequences. If they tested them and found them to be sincere, or if they knew that that was indeed the case without having to test them,

then they were not to send them back to the disbelievers [Sa'di]

- ii. Once it was determined that they are believers, it was an automatic divorce from their husbands in Mecca if they were married because such a marriage is not permitted between a Muslim woman and a polytheist man. The Muslims are also being told in this verse to refund their dowries to their former polytheist husbands in Mecca as compensation for their loss of these women. This is from the justice of Islam
- b. Allah also clarifies that Allah knows whether these women are sincere or not because nothing is hidden from Him. The reality of faith in the heart is only known to Allah and we can only judge others by the apparent [Sabuni]
 - i. This is why they are being told to test them to make their sincerity apparent through signs and clarifications because they did not know what is in the hearts of these women, only Allah knew [My comment]
- c. The believing men are then told that they can marry these newly migrated women after their waiting period is over if they give them their dowry [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- d. Allah in this verse also tells the Muslim men that if they had polytheist wives who are in Mecca [or migrated there after turning away from Islam], then to divorce them as well because they are not permitted for them and that they have the right to request their dowries back from them
 - i. Just as a Muslim woman is not permissible for a disbelieving man to marry, it is not permissible for a Muslim man to keep a disbelieving wife, so long as she persists in her disbelief, with the exception of women from the People of the Book [Sa'di]
- e. Allah knows whatever is beneficial for us and is Wise in His legislation [Sabuni]

11. And if any of your wives desert you to the disbelievers, and later you take spoils from them, then pay those whose wives have gone, the equivalent of whatever 'dowry' they had paid. And be mindful of Allah, in Whom you believe.

- a. Meaning if it happens that some of your women leave you for the disbelievers as renegades and you demand your dowry from the disbelievers but they do not give it to you, and thereafter you acquire booty from the disbelievers, then give those husbands whose wives left as renegades the equivalent of the dowry they paid [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. The disbelievers would take some payment in return for what they had spent on their spouses who joined the Muslims, by the same token, if the wife of a Muslim went over to the disbelievers and deserted her husband, then the Muslims were required to give him wealth to replace what he had spent on her because the polytheists of Mecca refused to refund the dowries for those polytheist women who left their husbands in Medina for Mecca. The Muslims were pleased with Allah's command but the disbelievers of Mecca were not, hence, they refused to comply [Sa'di and Sabuni]
- b. In the end of the verse, the believers are told to be mindful of Allah, in Whom they have faith, by fulfilling His instructions and avoiding His prohibitions [*al-Mukhtasar fee*

al-Tafseer]

12. O Prophet! When the believing women come to you, pledging to you that they will neither associate anything with Allah 'in worship', nor steal, nor fornicate, nor kill their children, nor falsely attribute 'illegitimate' children to their husbands, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their pledge, and ask Allah to forgive them. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

- a. Pledge gives the person a sense of belonging and loyalty
- b. Meaning when believing women come to pledge allegiance to you - as occurred at the time of the Conquest of Makkah - that they will not associate anything as partner to Allah, but they will worship Him alone, nor steal, nor commit adultery/fornication, nor kill their children in accordance with the custom of the people of ignorance, nor attribute to their husbands their children from adultery, nor go against you in any righteous thing such as prohibition from wailing, shaving off hair and tearing garments: - then accept their pledge of allegiance, and seek forgiveness for them from Allah for their sins after they pledge allegiance to you [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]*
- c. The meaning of the phrase '*nor disobey you in what is right*' has three interpretations [Ibn Jawzi]:
 - i. It prohibits wailing
 - ii. It prohibits wailing, scratching the face, tearing clothes, pulling out hair, etc.
 - iii. It encompasses all the commands of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ regarding the laws and etiquettes of Islam [because they are all what is 'right']
- d. This verse serves as evidence that obeying rulers is limited to permissible matters and does not apply to forbidden ones [Ibn Jawzi]

13. O believers! Do not ally yourselves with a people Allah is displeased with. They already have no hope for the Hereafter, just like the disbelievers have lost hope from people of the graves.

- a. Since the *surah* commenced with a warning against becoming allies with Allah's enemies, it ends with a warning against the same to reiterate what was said previously [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]*
- b. Some said this verse was revealed because some of the poor Muslims used to inform the Jews about the affairs of the Muslims, seeking closeness to them, in order to share in their wealth and food [Ibn Jawzi]
- c. Meaning do not take those upon whom Allah's wrath has fallen due to their disbelief as friends and allies. They have lost hope in Allah's reward in the Hereafter, just like the disbelievers who are buried in their graves have lost hope in Allah's mercy in the Hereafter, when they witnessed the reality of the matter and became certain that they will have no share in it. [The last sentence could also mean that] the disbelievers have lost hope in the resurrection of their dead - the occupants of the graves - due to their disbelief in resurrection [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]*