

MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

By
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Surah An-Nisa—cont....

(Ayaat 36-44)

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 disrespect the status of women. Moreover, each verse (Ayah) has been broken into sections in order to explain the subject matter of that particular portion and then relate it to the preceding and the proceeding ones. Sections of the same Verse are given in bold. Cross-references taken from other parts of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the messenger of Allah (SAW) are provided in italics.

Verse 36

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ
وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۚ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۗ

“Worship Allah (SWT) alone and associate none (nothing) with Him (SWT), and be noble (beneficial) to your parents and to your kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbor who is kith and kin, the neighbor who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess.”

The essence of Islam is to worship Allah (SWT) alone and not associate any partners with Him (SWT) because it is He (SWT) alone who created, controls, evolves and sustains the universe till the prescribed period of time known as the 'Hour' arrives. Thus we must

turn to Allah (SWT) alone by dedicating all forms of worship whether internal or external, material or transcendental only for Him (SWT). This includes love, glorification, hope, fear, reliance, supplication, seeking of aid, rituals of sacrifice, oaths, bowing, prostration, etc. At the Macro-level it entails striving to establish (or restore as in our case) all systems – political, economic, social, educational – and more in the exact manner that He (SWT) wants manifested.

Those who worship other than Allah (SWT) believe that although He is the Creator, but other beings of the creation also play a role in the running of the affairs of the world. A classic example of this is the Christian doctrine of Trinity. Unfortunately, many of the Muslims today have also fallen prey to this kind of Satanic ploy, often calling out for help and supplicating to others than Allah (SWT), both at the micro and the macro levels.

Secondly, in this ayah Allah (SWT) commands the believers to be virtuous to their fellow beings. He ordains that one's parents, relatives, neighbors, the poor, the weak, the distressed, the orphans and others who are in need of a lending hand should all be treated with kindness. Being kind to the creatures entails being generous to them and refraining from harming them.

The verse is a classic example of the rights of our Lord, Allah (SWT) and the rights of fellow beings incumbent on every one of us. In the jargon of Islamic Jurisprudence the former are termed as '*Huquq Allah*' and the latter '*Huquq-al-Ibad*'.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ فُتُورًا مَخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۗ

“Verily, Allah (SWT) does not like any (soul), arrogant and boastful”

Arrogance is arguably the first sin committed by anyone (Iblees to be precise, when he refused to obey Allah's command and prostrate before Adam). With much emphasis at disposal, this portion of the verse bemoans those who think high of themselves and do not care of their fellow beings. Allah (SWT) abhors arrogant and boastful creatures.

Verse 37

الَّذِينَ يَخْتَلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ

“Those who are niggardly and enjoin niggardliness on other men and hide what Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon them of His Bounties.”

The verse explains that Allah (SWT) is not fond of those who, in their arrogance, niggardliness and selfishness, do not spend in His (SWT) cause from the bounties and favors that He (SWT) has bestowed upon them such as money, property, wealth, energy, time, skills etc. They are themselves niggardly and enjoin others to be niggardly in a way as if Allah (SWT) has not bestowed anything upon them. For example a rich person who conceals Allah's (SWT) bounties by living below his standard and not spending from his wealth on himself, his family or the needy. So by his appearance people think of him as needy. How many times do we hear people living or doing business around us complaining of 'lack of profits and resources'?

وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ۝

“And We have prepared for the disbelievers a disgraceful torment.”

Generally such people would not be categorized as disbelievers. However, in the verse Allah (SWT) promises a painful punishment for 'such disbelievers' in the Hereafter. Apparently, these verses seem directed particularly towards the Munafiqin of Madinah, who possessed heaps and loads of wealth but became instant-misers when asked to spend some in the way of Allah (SWT), particularly at the call of Jihad (Qitaal). The verse may also entail those who try to choke the natural circulation of wealth via illegal means such as hoarding or colluding. Ripping someone else of his wealth also falls in the category of grave sins. Allah Knows best!

Verse 38

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۝

“And (also) those who spend of their wealth for the sake of ostentation and believe not in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day”

The likes of those, who are so resourceful that they could wipe starvation from the face of the earth in a day! Those who spend their wealth and property only to show off to the people, and not for the pleasure of Allah (SWT), they actually do not believe in Allah (SWT) nor the Day of Judgment.

وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا ۝

“And whoever takes Satan for his friend; then what an evil (wicked) friend he has befriended!”

So Satan becomes their companion and encourages them further to be miserly in spending, yet arrogant and boastful in attitude, directing them eventually towards Hellfire.

Verse 39

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوِ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ

“And what loss would they have had, if they had believed in Allah (SWT) and in the Last Day, and then spent in His (SWT) way of what Allah (SWT) has given them for sustenance.”

Therefore, would they have believed in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day and spent in His (SWT) cause instead of being tightfisted yet arrogant and boastful, then it surely would have been better for them in this world and in the Hereafter. In this world they would have helped others out of testing times and the reward in the Hereafter would have been nothing less than Allah's (SWT) pleasure and paradise.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيمًا

“And Allah (SWT) is the All-Knower of them (all).”

He (SWT) knows those amongst them who are true believers in Him (SWT) and the Last Day and who then perform righteous actions with unsoiled intentions. He (SWT) alone is the knower of All things, including intentions.

Verse 40

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ

“Surely! Allah (SWT) wrongs not even of the weight of a husk of a grain,”

In this verse Allah (SWT) reassures mankind that He (SWT) is not unjust to His (SWT) servants. In fact He (SWT) need not be unjust as all wealth, material or otherwise, is His (SWT) own creation and true ownership of all things belongs to Him (SWT) alone. Moreover, Keeping His (SWT) Word is one of His (SWT) Divine attributes. However, Allah (SWT) rewards people according to the quality of their deeds (or of the intentions behind them).

وَإِنْ تَكَ حَسَنَةً يُّضَعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“And if there is any good (deed), He (SWT) multiplies (the reward for) it and (even) grants from Himself (SWT) a resounding reward.”

If someone brings good deeds on the Day of Judgment, then Allah (SWT) says that He (SWT) will increase the reward twice and if He (SWT) pleases, He will increase it manifold, thus furnishing that person a loftier place in Paradise.

Verse 41

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ۝

“How (will it be) then, (imagine) when We bring forward from each nation a witness and We bring you [the Messenger of Allah (SAW)] as a witness against these people.”

Every Prophet of Allah (AS) will be a witness for those who believed in him (AS) and against those who rejected him (AS). As Allah’s (SWT) representative on earth, he (AS) will bear witness to the fact that he (AS) conveyed Allah’s (SWT) message to the people he (AS) was sent to and thus there will be no possibility for excuses. Similarly Prophet Muhammad (SAW) will testify as a witness against those who rejected him (SAW).

عن عبد الله (ابن مسعود) قال: قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: اقرأ عليّ. قال: قلت: أقرأ عليك وعليك أنزل؟ قال: إني أشتهي أن أسمعه من غيري. قال: فقرأت النساء حتى إذا بلغت: فكيف إذا جئنا من كل أمة بشهيدٍ وجئنا بك على هؤلاء شهيدًا. قال لي: كُفّ، أو أمسك. فرأيت عينيه تذرّفان. رواه البخاري (106:06)

Narrated Abdullah (Ibn Mas'ud), Allah's Apostle said to me: "Recite (of the Qur'an) for me". I said: "Shall I recite it to you although it had been revealed to you?!" He said: "I like to hear (the Qur'an) from others". So I recited 'Surah An-Nisa' till I reached: "How (will it be) then when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Muhammad) as a witness against these people?!" (4: 41) 'Then he said: "Stop!" Behold, his eyes were shedding tears then." Sahih Bukhari (06:106)

The mere fact that the Prophet (SAW) will be called as a witness against many, saddened him (SAW).

Verse 42

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ ۗ

“On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger (SAW) will wish that the earth might be leveled with them.”

On the Day of Judgment the disbelievers will wish that the earth

would open up and swallow them because of the disgrace and humiliation that they will suffer on account of their evil deeds, or that they could find some mode of hiding their faults.

وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا

“And (the fact is that) they will not be able to conceal anything from Allah (SWT).”

That would occur simply because Allah (SWT) is the Knower of all their deeds and intentions. Moreover, there will be witnesses against them as mentioned in the previous verse. Additionally each person will be self-aware of the deeds that he did in his worldly life and would hence be self-cognizant to an extent of what consequence now lays ahead for him.

Verse 43

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا

“O you who believe! Approach not prayers when you are drunk (intoxicated) until you know of what you utter. Nor when you are in a state of (sexual conjugal) impurity, except while traveling (journeying on the road), till you wash yourselves.”

This is the second of the three Divine Commandments concerning the banning of drinking liquor. The first commandment regarding intoxicants was revealed in Surah Al-Baqarah, that drinking is an evil thing, but the commandment in that verse did not explicitly prohibit the consumption of alcohol. Some of the believers then started to refrain from it but some of them did not give it up and often prayed in a state of intoxication, because of which they committed many mistakes in the recitation of the Qur'an during their prayer. Afterwards Allah (SWT) revealed this ayah and prohibited the believers from praying in a state of drunkenness, until they came back to their senses and grasped the meaning of words they uttered while praying.

As the subject is also related to entering mosques, in this part of the verse Allah (SWT) also commands believers not to enter mosques while in a state of conjugal impurity until they have made 'Ghusal' (Islamic mode of taking a bath) and cleansed themselves, but there is no harm on those who are journeying (and water is not available) as is

clearer from the next part of the verse.

وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَبَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا
فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ

“And if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes after privy after answering the call of nature, or you have been in sexual contact with women and you find no water, then take clean earth and wipe therewith your faces and hands.”

This Ayah describes the Commandment of Tayammum i.e. dry ablution from clean earth, which may be performed in place of normal ablution or Ghusal on becoming sexually impure. If no clean water is available or if its use is harmful then this dry (with clean sand or earth) ablution (Tayammum) is allowed.

To perform Tayammum, a person should strike the soil with his hands, blow into them and wipe his face and his hands up to the wrist, as is recorded by Bukhari, narrated by Ammar (RA).

He said, "We became sexually impure and had no water, so we rolled in the dirt and prayed. This was mentioned to the Prophet (SAW) and he said, 'This would have been enough for you,' and he (SAW) struck the earth with his (SAW) hands, blew in them and then wiped his (SAW) face and hands with them."

(Sahih Bukhari 7: 337; Musnad Ahmed 4: 265)

While the Hadith recorded by Darqutni has the following words, 'It would have been enough for you to strike the ground with your hands, blow into them, and then wipe your face and hands up to the elbows.'

(Darqutni)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ۝

“Truly, Allah (SWT) is Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving.”

Thus by giving us merciful concessions, at times even in the performance of His (SWT) strictest of Divine commandments in cases where one does not get hold of the resources to fulfill them, Tayammum being a case in point, Allah (SWT) is indeed Pardoning and Forgiving.