

Tafseer of Surah Al-Ahzab

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"O Prophet (Muhammad)! Keep your duty to Allah, and obey not the disbelievers and the hypocrites (i.e., do not follow their advices). Verily! Allah is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise. And follow that which is inspired in you from your Lord. Verily, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.

And put your trust in Allah, and Sufficient is Allah as a Wakil (Trustee, or Disposer of affairs). Allah has not put for any man two hearts inside his body. Neither has He made your wives whom you declare to be like your mothers' backs, your real mothers. [AzZihar is the saying of a husband to his wife, "You are to me like the back of my mother" i.e. You are unlawful for me to approach.], nor has He made your adopted sons your real sons. That is but your saying with your mouths. But Allah says the truth, and He guides to the (Right) Way.

Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers, that is more just with Allah. But if you know not their father's (names, call them) your brothers in faith and Mawalikum (your freed slaves). And there is no sin on you if you make a mistake therein, except in regard to what your hearts deliberately intend. And Allah is Ever OftForgiving, Most Merciful."

(Surah al-Ahzab #33 verses 1-5)

Definition of some of the Arabic terms in the verses:

Ittaqillah: Fear Allah (azza wajal) , remaining on taqwa and being persistent in it. Taqwa is a term that encompasses doing all good and refraining from all evil. Its origin is the word "wiyayah" which means protecting and securing.

Kafireen: It is a plural word form of the word Kafir, which literally means to hide. But in Shari' terms it refers to someone who is not a Muslim. To further explain for instance the literal meaning of Salah is to make supplications (dua'a). But in Shari' terms it means Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, and so on. The same principle applies to the word Kafir. While it has a literal meaning, it has an Islamic meaning (shar') of it which means someone who is not a Muslim.

There are four kinds of Kufur:

1- Kufur Denial (enkar) : This is like the atheist who denies the existence of Allah (azza wajal). He neither knows of nor believes in Allah (azza wajal) or Allah's existence. He is a disbeliever in his heart and his tongue.

2- Kufur Juhood : This refers to believing in Allah (azza wajal) in the heart but denying this belief by speech. For instance, the Kufur of Iblees, and the Kufur of the people of the book.

3- Kufur 3inad : This refers to the stubbornness into submission. He approves the belief in Allah (azza wajal) and admit to it, but fails to submit to this belief because of jealousy or enmity. The Kufur of Abu Jahal and others like him are examples of this.

4- Kufur an-Nifaq : This is to admit the belief in Islam by speech but does not believe in it with the heart.

Munafiqoon: This is the plural word form of the word Munafiq, which means to say something with the tongue, showing belief in Islam, but hides the opposite in the heart.

Wakeela: This means Sustainer. Allah (azza wajal) is the one who guarantees everything we need (rizk) that will come to us as his servants. The one who is mutawwakil on Allah (azza wajal) is the one who knows that Allah (azza wajal) guarantees his rizk and that commandments come from Allah (azza wajal) so much so that he depends totally on Allah (azza wajal) and no one else.

Abu Alsood said "tawakkal alallah" means to leave everything up to Allah (azza wajal) and "kafa allah wakeela" means Allah (azza wajal) is sufficient as protector as the one and only whom you leave everything up to.

Tadhaharoon: This is an act of separation by the husband from the wife. It is not a formal divorce but merely an abstinence from any relations with the wife. This happens when a man says to his wife "You are to me like my mother." It was the worst form of divorce in jahiliyah, where a man tells his wife "You are like my mothers back."

Ad3iyakum: This is the plural for the word form of Da3y, which means calling someone your son who is not your son. This is an adoption that was abrogated in Islam. For instance, the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) adopted Zaid ibn Harith before the revelation which abrogated the practice of adoption.

Aqsat: This refers to Justice.

Mawaleekum: This pertains to different kinds of loyalty. For instance, the relationship between families is mawaly. The relationship between a slave and his master is mawaly, as is the relationship between Muslims.

Ghafoor: This refers to the one who forgives the sins.

Raheem: This refers to the merciful in taking the sins away from those who make faults.

Reason for revelation:

1) "O Prophet (Muhammad)! Keep your duty to Allah, and obey not the disbelievers and the hypocrites (i.e., do not follow their advices). Verily! Allah is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise."

The Quraish went to the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) in Sulh AlHudaybiyyah (The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah) and offered a proposal. Among the conditions of the proposal was not to talk about Lat and Uzza (both idols) in an evil manner and to say it has shafa3ah. The prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) hated that, thus verse was revealed.

2) "Allah has not put for any man two hearts inside his body."

This is in reference to a man from the Quraish named Jameel bin Ma3mar AlFihry who was a memorizer. The Quraysh said he could not memorize everything he hears if not for him having two hearts. Jameel in fact used to say "I have two hearts, I can comprehend more than Muhammad in each one."

However, in the battle of Badr, the mushrikoon were defeated and among them was Jameel. Abu Sufyan found him with his shoes hung in his hand and another in his foot. Abu Sufyan asked him what was the situation of the people. Jameel informed Abu Sufyan they were defeated. Abu Sufyan asked why one of his shoes were in his hand and other on his foot. Jameel said he did not even realize that. Thus, they knew Jameel was a liar because he would not have forgotten anything.

3) "...nor has He made your adopted sons your real sons."

When The Prophet muhammaed (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) married Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was previously married to Zaid ibn Harith, the prophet's adopted son, the Jews and the hypocrites accused the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) that he had married his son's wife. In Islam, when a man marries, he can never marry his previous mother-in-law in the event he divorces his wife or she dies. The same rule applies to the father-in-law and all that it implies. Thus, the hypocrites began to mock the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam). This is the reason for the clarification that the adopted children are not really one's own flesh and blood children.

4) "Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers, that is more just with Allah. But if you know not their father's (names, call them) your brothers in faith and Mawalikum (your freed slaves). "

Umar (radhi Allahu anhu) as narrated in Bukhari, used to say that they used to call Zaid, Zaid bin Muhammad, until Allah (azza wajal) revealed this ayah. Thereafter, he was called Zaid Ibn Harithah.

Unique lessons from the verses:

1) Allah (azza wajal) called his messenger by saying (Ya ayyuhan nabi!- "O Prophet!") From this we learn:

a) Calling him this recognizes his position as a prophet and as a messenger, and it is an honor to the position of the prophet Muhammad.

b) We are not to call him "ya Muhammad" but rather we address him with respect. If Allah addresses the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) in this manner, then we should call him better than this or equal to it.

c) This shows the specialty of the prophet over other prophets. Allah (azza wajal) called other messengers in the Qur'an by saying, ya Adam, ya Nooh, ya Ibrahim, ya Musa, ya Dawood as opposed to how Allah (azza wajal) addresses the prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam). When the prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) is directly mentioned in the Qur'an and Allah (azza wajal) is addressing him directly there is always something after it that indicates his prophethood so it is known and clear to all- "O messenger of Allah!"- Rasulallah. The only time we find the name "Muhammad" in the Qur'an by his name only is when Allah (azza wajal) wants to give an affirmative statement such as Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.

2) Why would Allah tell the Messenger of Allah "Keep your duty to Allah.." to when he is already one that has taqwa?

· This is a reminder to continue upon the path of taqwa and to keep increasing in this path without any ending. When we say in every prayer "Ihdina el sirat al mustakeem"- Oh Allah guide us to the right path, it does not mean we are not on the right path, it means to keep guiding us on the right path because the struggle in this life never ends, and with that- to keep increasing us in this path.

· Some scholars claim that though it addresses the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam), it is to the whole Muslim Ummah. Proof: At the end of the verse, Allah (azza wajal) said "Verily, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do." (inallaha kana bima ta3maloona khabeera)

When some people get angry because one tells them "Ittaqillah" and yet here is proof that it was even told to the best of humanity- the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam).

3) There is a secret in mentioning the hearts before anything else is from the people of jahiliyah.

Of the 3 things mentioned in those verses:

No one has two hearts

No thihar: You cannot divorce your wife by simply telling her "You are to me like my mother" as was practiced among the Quraish.

No adoption: It is not permissible attributing your name to a person who is not your son by blood.

Why was the lesson of no two hearts placed above the two other lessons in degree of importance? Despite the fact that these three are all propesterous claims by the Quraish, it comes as a realization that the next two lessons (thihar & adoption) are just as propesterous as believing a person has two hearts. Meaning , if the mind cannot accept the lie of having two hearts, then it must follow that the mind cannot accept how ridiculous a thihar (divorcing a woman by saying she is like your mother) and adoption (calling a man by your name as if he was your son) is.

4) "That is but your saying with your mouths. " (thalikum kawlokum be afwahikum)

This means the only place these things exist is by our speech, having no basis of truth & validity whatsoever. For instance, if a school has a written rule that shorts are not allowed at school but people wear them anyway, we say this rule is just "ink on paper". These three things are the same way. No truth in saying one is divorced by telling the wife "You are to me like my mother" in the same way as calling another person your son when he is not, and in the same way people can possibly believe that there are people with two hearts.

The Quraish used to believe every smart man had 2 hearts until Jameel bin Ma3mar exposed himself when was in Badr. Hence, we learn that what is a popular and widespread belief but has no basis in Islam means it is not valid.

5) "that is more just with Allah." (thalikum aqsat)

The justice is no man can claim to have two hearts, no man can divorce his wife by stating "You are to me like my mother.", and no man can call another person his son when he is not his son. The opposite of these is oppression.

Ahkam from the verses:

1) Does the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) make mistakes?

The Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) does make mistakes in worldly matters. For instance, the sahabah came to the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and said to him they needed his advice because their trees were dying. He (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) suggested to trim the leaves. They did that but the trees became worse. So he (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) told them "You are more knowledgeable in the matters of this life." They are ma3soomeen.

Does the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) make mistakes in issues of the Deen?

The prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) does make mistakes in issues of the deen but with **RESTRICTION**. He (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) makes mistakes in revelation on to teach us. This is the **ONLY** time he makes mistakes. If he made a mistake in revelation, it was a mistake that Allah (azza wajal) wanted him to make because there is a benefit that comes out of it and Allah (azza wajal) would correct him. For instance, when the PM met the blind man as told in Surah Abasa. The prophet made a mistake, Allah (azza wajal) sent a revelation reprimanding him. Likewise, one asr prayer the pm made two raka'ats instead of 4 and everyone was baffled. So a man, Dhul Yadayn, brought it to his attention. "Oh prophet of Allah, did the salah become less or did you make a mistake?" (take note of his manners toward the prophet) The prophet "It neither became shorter nor did I make a mistake. Neither of the two." (he did not remember making a mistake) So the prophet turned to the other companions and asked them if it ws true, they all agreed with dhul yadayn. Then the prophet stood up and prayed two more, today we call sajdahtu sahw. Here there is benefit because had the prophet not make this mistake then we would not know how to correct our prayer in the event we do commit this mistake (something which is inevitable because we are human beings.)

We have to believe that our Qur'an, the revelation has not mistakes in them. We accept the Hadith likewise and there can be no mistakes in them.

2) Is thihar haram?

Thihar is when a man tells his wife "You are to me like my mother." This is haram as Allah (azza wajal) made it haram in this ayah. During the time of Jahiliyah this was considered divorce. Unlike in Islam, where there are three divorces. A Thihar was worse than the permissible divorce because the wife would be banned forever as a man's wife by thihar just like a mother is to her son.

An old woman came to the prophet and complained that she had served her husband all her life and when she became old and fragile her husband told her "You are to me like my mother." She was very distressed and asked the Prophet if she was truly divorced. She whispered her words to the prophet and as soon as she said her words, the first three verses of Surah Mujadalah was revealed.

"Indeed Allah has heard the statement of her (Khaulah bint Tha'labah) that disputes with you (O Muhammad) concerning her husband (Aus bin AsSamit), and complains to Allah. And Allah hears the argument between you both. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Seer.

Those among you who make their wives unlawful (Az-Thihar) to them by saying to them "You are like my mother's back." They cannot be their mothers. None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And verily, they utter an ill word and a lie. And verily, Allah is Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving.

And those who make unlawful to them (their wives) (by Az-Thihar) and wish to free themselves from what they uttered, (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch each other. That is an admonition to you (so that you may not return to such an ill thing). And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

And he who finds not (the money for freeing a slave) must fast two successive months before they both touch each other. And for him who is unable to do so, he should feed sixty of Miskin (poor). That is in order that you may have perfect Faith in Allah and His Messenger. These are the limits set by Allah. And for disbelievers, there is a painful torment." (Surah Mujadalah: 1-4)

Thus, Allah (azza wajal) abolished this because it was oppressive and it is not counted as one of the valid ways to divorce.

When one finds they have committed this the must:

- a) free a slave
- b) if there is no slave, they must fast 60 days in a row
- c) if this cannot be done, one must feed sixty of Miskeen

This is to show how heavy these words are towards ones wife. After these conditions are met and the man has repented, she can be his wife again.

3) "And there is no sin on you if you make a mistake therein, except in regard to what your hearts deliberately intend. And Allah is Ever OftForgiving, Most Merciful." *What does Allah (azza wajal) mean by "mistake and purpose" in the verse?*

Allah (azza wajal) said there is no sin for those who make a mistake and there is a sin for those who do these on purpose.

Two opinions on this matter:

A - Mujahid said "by mistake" is what was done before the revelation of this verse and "on purpose" what is done after the verse was revealed.

B - Qutadah said "by mistake" is anything that was done unintentionally.

4) Can you call someone "my brother", "my beloved one", or "my son"?

The verse appears to permit that it is permissible if it is done in the spirit of brotherhood in Islam. If one calls another "my son" out of respect, this is also permissible. This is seen in the hadith where the sahabah was stoning before dhuhr during the Hajj. And the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) called them to correct them since the stoning was supposed to be done after Dhuhr. He called them "Oh my sons! (abunya), don't throw the stones in Hajj until sunrise." in the context of respect. The prophet called a group of sahabah He also called Anas "my son" as a show of respect.

If you do not know their father, you can call them "my beloved one."

5) Is adoption permitted in Islam?

The rule is one can adopt but the child must keep his own name after his own father. While one is permitted to take of other people, it is not permissible to attribute those under the care as being their blood related son or daughter. Attributing someone as a blood related son to other than his father is a major sin. The prophet said, "Whomever attributes himself to other than his father or other than his family, may the curse of Allah and the angels and the people befall on him. Allah will not accept from him tawbah or compensation." (Bukhari and Muslim).

In another hadith, "Whoever attributes himself to other than his own parents and he knows it is a kafer." (Bukhari and Muslim).

"Whoever attributes himself to other than his father and he knows it, Jannah is haram upon him." (Bukhari and Muslim).

According to Al-Aloosy and Ibn Katheer, when someone says "Oh son go do this.." out of sympathy or respect, then this is not haram.

In the event that the adoption agency (in modern times) gives the child a false name that would otherwise fall under this sin, then it is not under the control of the child and the sin will fall upon those who were responsible for this.

Basic lessons from the verses:

1. The order to fear Allah (azza wajal) .
2. Among the pillars of Iman is depending on Allah (azza wajal) and turning to him in submission in all times and all situations.
3. To abolish the evil and unbelievable tradition of Jahiliyah have no room in Islam and Islam warns of them.
4. One who claims he has two hearts is a liar.
5. Believing a wife can be like a mother in relationship is haram and of the jahiliyah.
6. It is haram to adopt by attributing the child to you or to other than his real father. But you can take care of them and give them their real name.
7. It is permissible to call someone "my brother", "my beloved" if "in Islam" is what is meant.
8. Allah (azza wajal) does not make a person accountable for mistakes or what they do unintentionally.
9. The honor of the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) where Allah (azza wajal) calls him "Ya ayyuhan nabi, ya ayyuhan rasool". This is a lesson that we honor any respectable person around us like our parents.
10. Messengers cannot make mistakes in revelation unless it is for Allah (azza wajal) to teach us a lesson and derived from it is a greater benefit.