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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 60

SURAH AL-
MUMTAHANAH
COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

060

SURAH AL-MUMTAHANAH

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

Introduction and Summary

This is the fourth of the ten Madinah Surahs, each dealing with a special point in the life of the Ummah.

Here the point is: what social relations are possible with the Unbelievers? A distinction is made between those who persecute you for your Faith and want to destroy you and your Faith, and those who have shown no such rancour. For the later there is hope of mercy and forgiveness. The question of women and cross-marriage is equitably dealt with.

The date is after the Pagans had broken the treaty of Hdaybiyah, for which see Introduction to Surah 47--- say about A.H. 8, not long before the conquest of Makkah.

Summary- The enemies of your Faith, who would exterminate you and your Faith, are not fit objects of your love: follow Abraham's example: but with those Unbelievable who show no rancour, you should deal with kindness and justice: marriage between Believers and Unbelievers, (60-1-13, and C. 239).

C.239 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*What social relations should you hold
With men whose hearts are filled with rancour---
Who hate both Allah and men of God?
Surely you cannot offer love and friendship
To such as seek to destroy your Faith,
And you. Seek protection for you and yours
From Allah and not from Allah's sworn enemies.
But deal kindly and justly with all; it may be
That those who hate you now may love you;
For Allah can order all things. But look not
For protection to those who are bent on driving
You out. Let not believing women
Be handed over to Unbelievers;
No marriage tie is lawful between them.
When women wish to join your society,
Take their assurance that they yield not
To sin or unbeseeming conduct.
Take every care to keep your society
Free and pure, and self-contained.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ...

1. O ye who believe!

take not My enemies and yours as friends (or protectors) --

... تُلْفُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ...

offering them (your) love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you,

C5409. The immediate occasion for this was a secret letter sent by one Hatib, a Muhajir, from Madinah, to the Pagans at Makkah, in most friendly terms, seeking for their protection on behalf of his children and relatives left behind in Makkah.

The letter was intercepted, and he confessed the truth. He was forgiven as he told the truth and his motive did not appear to be heinous, but this instruction was given for future guidance.

This was shortly before the conquest of Makkah, but the principle is of universal application. You cannot be on terms of secret intimacy with the enemies of your Faith and people, who are persecuting your Faith and seeking to destroy your Faith and you. You may not do so even for the sake of your relatives as it compromises the life and existence of your whole community.

... يُخْرَجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمْ ...

and have (on the contrary) driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes), (simply) because ye believe in Allah your Lord!

C5410. Such was the position of the Muslim community in Madinah after the Hijrah and before the conquest of Makkah.

... إِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِي تُسِرُّونَ

إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمُودَّةِ ...

If ye have come out to strive in My Way and to seek My Good Pleasure, (take them not as friends), holding secret converse of love (and friendship) with them:

... وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَحْفَيْتُمْ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُمْ ...

for I know full well all that ye conceal and all that ye reveal.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ (١)

And any of you that does this has strayed from the Straight Path.

إِنْ يَتَقَفَوْكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءَ وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُمْ

بِالسُّوءِ ...

2. If they were to get the better of you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you for evil;

C5411. Besides the question of your fidelity to your own people, even your own selfish interests require you to beware of secret intrigues with enemies. They will welcome you as cat's paw. But what will happen when they have used you and got the better of you and your people! Then they will show you their hand. And a heavy hand it will be! Not only will they injure you with their hands but with their tongues! The only words they will use for you will be "Traitors to their own"! If they intrigue with you now, it is to pervert you from the Path of Truth and righteousness and win you over to their evil ways.

... وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تُكْفَرُونَ (٢)

and they desire that ye should reject the Truth.

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ ...

3. Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children

C5412. The plea of children and relatives (see n. 5409 above) will be no excuse for treachery when the Day of

Judgment comes. Your children and family will not save you. The Judgment will be in the hands of Allah, and He has full knowledge of all your overt and hidden acts and motives.

... يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ...

on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you:

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٣)

for Allah sees well and that ye do.

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ ...

4. There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him,

C5413. See 9:114.

Abraham was tender-hearted, and loyal to his father and his people. He warned them against idolatry and sin, and prayed for his father, but when his father and his people became open enemies of Allah, Abraham entirely dissociated himself from them, and left his home, his father, his people, and his country. Those with him were his believing wife and nephew Lut and any other Believers that went into exile with him.

... إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ...

when they said to their people:

"We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah:

... كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةُ ...

and there has arisen between us and you, enmity

C5414. The enemies of Allah are enemies of the righteous, and they hate the righteous. Therefore the righteous must cut themselves off eternally from them, unless they repent and come back to Allah. In that case they receive Allah's mercy and are entitled to all the rights of love and brotherhood. This shows that our detestation is for evil, not for men as such so long as there is a chance for repentance.

See also verse 7 below.

But we must give no chance to Evil for working evil on our Brotherhood at any time.

... وَالْبَغْضَاءَ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدَّهُ ...

and hatred forever -- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone":

... إِنْ أَقُولَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ...

شيءٍ ...

But not when Abraham said to his father:

"I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from Allah."

C5415. Refer again to 9:114, n. 1365: and n. 5413 above.

Abraham's conduct is not condemned. it was a special case, and is not to be imitated by weaker men, who may fall into sin by thinking too much of sinners.

... رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٤)

(They prayed): "Our Lord! in Thee do we trust and

to Thee do we turn in repentance:

to Thee is (our) final Goal.

C5416. This prayer indicates what our attitude should be. We must trust to Allah, and not to Allah's enemies to protect and befriend ourselves, our families, or those near and dear to us.

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

5. "Our Lord! Make us not a (test and) trial for the Unbelievers,

C5417. In n. 1198 to 8:25, I have explained the shades of meaning in the word Fitnah.

In 2:102 Harut and Marut were a trial to test the righteous who trusted in Allah from the unrighteous who resorted to evil and superstition.

Here the prayer to Allah is that we should be saved from becoming so weak as to tempt the Unbelievers to try to attack and destroy us.

... وَاعْفُرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ...

but forgive us, our Lord!

... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٥)

For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ ...

6. There was indeed **in them** an excellent example for you to follow -- for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day.

C5418. In them: i.e. in their attitude of prayer and reliance on Allah, and of dissociation from evil.

... وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٦)

But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all Wants, Worthy of all Praise.

C5419. If any one rejects Allah's Message or Law, the loss is his own. It is not Allah Who needs him or his worship or his sacrifice or his praise. Allah is independent of all wants, and His attributes are inherently deserving of all praise, whether the wicked give such praise or not, in word or deed.

Section 2

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً ...

7. It may be that **Allah will grant love (and friendship)** between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies:

C5420. Apparent religious hatred or enmity or persecution may be due to ignorance or over-zeal in a soul, which Allah will forgive and use eventually in His service, as happened in the case of Hadhrat 'Umar, who was a different man before and after his conversion.

As stated in n. 5414 above, we should hate evil, but not men as such.

وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٧)

for Allah has power (over all things);
and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ...

8. Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes,

... أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ...

from dealing kindly and justly with them:

C5421. Even with Unbelievers, unless they are rampant and out to destroy us and our Faith, we should deal kindly and equitably, as is shown by our holy Prophet's own example.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٨)

for Allah loveth those who are just.

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ...

9. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes,

... وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوهُمْ ...

and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection).

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٩)

It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَاِمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ...

10. O ye who believe!

when there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them:

C5422. Under the treaty of Hdaybiyah [see Introduction to Surah 48, paragraph 4, condition (3)], women under guardianship (including married women), who fled from the Quraish in Makkah to the Prophet's protection at Madinah were to be sent back. But before this Ayah was issued, the Quraish had already broken the treaty, and some instruction was necessary as to what the Madinah Muslims should do in those circumstances. Muslim women married to Pagan husbands in Makkah were oppressed for their Faith, and some of them came to Madinah as refugees. After this, they were not to be returned to the custody of their Pagan husbands at Makkah, as the marriage of believing women with non-Muslims was held to be dissolved if the husbands did not accept Islam. But in order to give no suspicion to the Pagans that they were badly treated as they lost the dower they had given on marriage, that dower was to be repaid to the husbands. Thus helpless women refugees were to be protected at the cost of the Muslims.

...اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ...

Allah knows best as to their Faith:

... فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ...

if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers.

C5423. The condition was that they should be Muslim women. How were the Muslims to know?

A non-Muslim woman, in order to escape from her lawful guardians in Makkah, might pretend that she was a Muslim. The true state of her mind and heart would be known to Allah alone. But if the Muslims, on an examination of the woman, found that she professed Islam, she was to have protection. The examination would be directed (among other things) to the points mentioned in verse 12 below.

... لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ ...

They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them.

... وَأَتَوْهُم مَّا أَنْفَقُوا ...

But pay the Unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower).

... وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ ...

And there will be no blame on you if ye marry them on payment of their dower to them.

C5424. As the marriage was held to be dissolved (see [n. 5422](#) above), there was no bar to the remarriage of the refugee Muslim woman with a Muslim man on the payment of the usual dower to her.

... وَلَا تُمَسِّكُوا بِعَصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ ...

But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women:

C5425. Unbelieving women in a Muslim society would only be a clog and a handicap. There would be neither happiness for them, nor could they conduce in any way to a healthy life of the society in which they lived as aliens. They were to be sent away, as their marriage was held to be dissolved; and the dowers paid to them were to be demanded from the guardians to whom they were sent back, just as in the contrary case the dowers of believing women were to be paid back to their Pagan ex-husbands ([n. 5422](#) above).

... وَاسْأَلُوا مَّا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلَيْسَ أَلْوَا مَّا أَنْفَقُوا ...

ask for what ye have spent on their dowers, and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you).

ذَلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

Such is the command of Allah:

He judges (with justice) between you: and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

وَإِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقِبْتُمْ ...

11. And if any of your wives deserts you to the Unbelievers, and ye have an accession (by the coming over of a woman from the other side),

C5426. A very unlikely contingency, considering how much better position the women occupied in Islam than under Pagan custom. But all contingencies have to be provided for equitably in legislation. If a woman went over to the Pagans, her dower would be recoverable from the Pagans and payable to the deserted husband.

If a woman came over from the Pagans, her dower would be payable to the Pagans. Assuming that the two dowers were equal, the one would be set off against the other as between the two communities; but within the communities the deserted individual would be compensated by the individual who gains a wife. If the dowers were unequal, the balance would be recoverable as between the communities, and the adjustment would then be made as between the individuals.

In practice the common Fund compensated the deserted husband in anticipation of any necessary adjustments.

... فَأَتُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا...

then pay to those whose wives have deserted the equivalent of what they had spent (on their dower):

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ (١١)

and fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَنْ لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ

سَيِّئًا...

12. O Prophet!

when believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that

- they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah,

C5427. Now come directions as to the points on which women entering Islam should pledge themselves. Similar points apply to men, but here the question is about women, and especially such as were likely, in those early

days of Islam, to come from Pagan society into Muslim society in the conditions discussed in notes [5422](#) and [5423](#) above.

A pledge on these points would search out their real motives:

1. to worship none but Allah;
2. not to steal;
3. not to indulge in sex outside the marriage tie;
4. not to commit infanticide; (the Pagan Arabs were prone to female infanticide):
5. not to indulge in slander or scandal; and
6. generally, to obey loyally the law and principles of Islam.

The last was a comprehensive and sufficient phrase, but it was good to indicate also the special points to which attention was to be directed in those special circumstances. Obedience was of course to be in all things just and reasonable: Islam requires strict discipline but not slavishness. (R).

... وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ ...

- that they will not steal,
- that they will not commit adultery (or fornication),
- that they will not kill their children,

... وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ ...

- that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood,

C5427a. "That they will not utter slander intentionally forging falsehood". Literally, "...nor produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet,". These words mean that they should not falsely attribute the paternity of their illegitimate children to their lawful husbands thereby adding to the monstrosity of their original sin of infidelity. [Eds.]

... وَلَا يَعْصِيكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ قَبَائِعُهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ ...

- and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter --

then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins):

C5428. If pledges are sincerely given for future conduct, admission to Islam is open. If there is anything in the past, for which there is evidence of sincere repentance, forgiveness is to be prayed for. Allah forgives in such cases: how can man refuse to give such cases a real chance?

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

13. O ye who believe!

turn not (for friendship) to people on whom is the Wrath of Allah.

C5429. So we come back to the theme with which we started in this Surah: that we should not turn for friendship and intimacy to those who break Allah's Law and are outlaws in Allah's Kingdom.

The various phrases of this question, and the legitimate qualifications, have already been mentioned, and the argument is here rounded off.

Cf. also 58:14.

... قَدْ يَيْسُوا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ كَمَا يَبْسُ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ (١٣)

Of the Hereafter they are already in despair, just as the Unbelievers are in despair about those (buried) in graves.

C5430. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future Life, can therefore have no hope beyond this life. Miserable indeed is this life to them; for the ills of this life are real to them, and they can have no hope of redress.

But such is also the state of others- People of the Book or not-who wallow in sin and incur the divine Wrath. Even if they believe in a Future Life, it can only be to them a life of horror, punishment, and despair.

For those of Faith the prospect is different. They may suffer in this life, but this life to them is only a fleeting shadow that will soon pass away. The Reality is beyond; there will be full redress in the Beyond, and Achievement and Felicity such as they can scarcely conceive of in the terms of this life.