

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 63

SURAH AL-MUNAFIQUN

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

063

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Introduction and Summary

This is the seventh of the ten short Madinah Surahs dealing with a special feature in the social life of the Brotherhood.

The special feature here deal with is the wiles and mischief of the Hypocrite element in any community, and the need of guarding against it and against the temptation it throws in the way of the Believers.

The battle of Uhud (Shawal A.H.3) unmasked the Hypocrites in Madinah: See 3:167, and n. 476. This Surah may be referred to some time after that event, say about 4 A.H. or possibly 5 A.H.

If the words reported in verse 8 were uttered in the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq, A.H. 5, (See n. 5475 below).

Summary- False are the 3 oaths of Hypocrites; they only seek selfish ends: Believers should beware of their wiles and strive devotedly always for the Cause (63:1-11, and C. 242).

C.242 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*The oaths of Hypocrites are a screen
For their misdeeds. They think they deceive
With their fair exteriors and plausible talk,
But their minds are impervious to the real Truth.
They may plot to withhold from men of God
Such things of this world as they may command;
They may plot to expel and persecute the righteous;
They may call them ill names and slight them,
But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens
and the earth, and He will bestow according
To His wise and universal Plan. Let not
the world's foolish craze divert the Believers
from the service of Allah--- from good deeds and Charity.
Now in the time; All vain will be
your pleas and your regrets when the shadow
of death cuts off your last chance of Repentance!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ ...

1. **When the Hypocrites come to thee,**

C5466. The hypocrite element, if one exists in any society, is a source of weakness and a danger to its health and its very existence.

When the holy Prophet came to Madinah in Hijrah, his arrival was welcome to all the patriotic citizens: it not only united them in common life and healed their old differences, but it brought honour and light to them in the person of the greatest living Prophet. But there were some baser elements filled with envy. Such hopes as they had entertained of attaining power and leadership by playing on the animosities of the factions were now dashed to the ground. They now began to work underground. For fear of the majority they dared not oppose the new growing Brotherhood of Righteousness. They tried to undermine it by intriguing secretly with its enemies and swearing openly its loyalty to the holy Prophet. They were thoroughly unmasked and discredited at the battle of Uhud.

See 3:167, and n. 476.

... قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ ...

they say, "We bear witness that thou art indeed the Messenger of Allah."

... وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١)

Allah knoweth that thou art indeed His Messenger,
and Allah beareth witness that the Hypocrites are indeed liars.

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً ...

2. They have made their oaths a screen (for their misdeeds):

C5467. Cf. 58:16 and n. 5358.

When they say that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, it is Allah's own truth: but what is in their hearts? Nothing but falsehood.

... فَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ...

thus they obstruct (men) from the Path of Allah:

... إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢)

truly evil are their deeds.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ...

3. That is because they believed, then they rejected Faith:

... فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٣)

so a seal was set on their hearts: therefore they understand not.

C5468. Cf. 2:7.

Their double-dealing has fogged their understanding.

In Arabic the heart is taken to be the seat of understanding as well as of affection.

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ ...

4. When thou lookest at them, their exteriors please thee;

C5469. The Hypocrites at all times are plausible people, and so were the Hypocrites of Madinah. They present a fine exterior; they dress well; they can usually afford fine equipages; they try to win the confidence of everyone, as they have no scruples in telling lies, and apparently expressing agreement with everyone. There are fair spoken, and as such does not check their tongues, their flattery and deception know no bounds.

But all this is on the outside. As they have no sincerity, nothing that they say or do is worth anything.

... وَإِنْ يَفُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ...

and when they speak, thou listenest to their words.

... كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشْبٌ مَّسْنَدَةٌ ...

They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on their own).

C5470. Good timber is strong in itself and can support roofs and buildings. Hollow timber is useless, and has to be propped up against other things. The Hypocrites are like rotten timber. They have no firm character themselves, and for others they are unsafe props to rely upon.

... يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

They think that every cry is against them.

C5471. Their conscience always troubles them. If any cry is raised, they immediately get alarmed, and think it is against themselves. Such men are worse than open enemies.

... هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ...

They are the enemies; so beware of them.

... قَاتِلْهُمْ اللَّهُ أَلَىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ (٤)

The curse of Allah be on them!

How are they deluded (away from the Truth)!

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ...

5. And when it is said to them,

"Come, the Messenger of Allah will pray for your forgiveness,"

C5472. Even hypocrisy like other sins can be forgiven by repentance and amendment, provided there is a will and earnest desire to turn from evil and seek the Grace of Allah. In this case there was none.

... لَوْأَ رَأَوْسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٥)

they turn aside their heads, and thou wouldst see them turning away their faces in arrogance.

سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ...

6. It is equal to them whether thou pray for their forgiveness or not. Allah will not forgive them.

C5473. The stiff-necked rejecters of Allah's Truth have made a wide gulf between themselves and Allah's Grace. No prayer for them will help them. In the attitude of rebellion and transgression they cannot obtain Allah's forgiveness.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٦)

Truly Allah guides not rebellious transgressors.

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَيَّ مِنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا ...

7. They are the ones who say,

"Spend nothing on those who are with Allah's Messenger, to the end that they may disperse (and quit Madinah)."

C5474. The Muhajirun, who had come to be with the holy Prophet in Madinah in exile, were received, helped, entertained by the Ansar (Helpers). The Hypocrites in Madinah did not like this, and tried in underhand ways to dissuade the good folk of Madinah from doing all they could for the exiles. But their tricks did not succeed.

The small Muslim community grew from strength to strength until they were able to stand on their own resources and greatly to augment the resources of their hosts as well. It is goodness that produces strength and prosperity, and Allah holds the keys of the treasures of man's well-being. It is not for Allah's enemies to dole out or withhold the unbounded treasures of Allah.

... وَلِلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٧)

But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth; but the Hypocrites understand not.

يَقُولُونَ لَئِن رَّجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ ...

8. They say,

"If we return to Madinah, surely the more honorable (element) will expel there from the meaner."

C5475. Words of this import were spoken by 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, the leader of the Madinah Hypocrites, to or about the Exiles, in the course of the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq in the fourth or fifth year of the Hijrah.

He had hopes of leadership which were disappointed by the coming to Madinah of a man far greater than he. So he arrogated to himself and his clique the title of "the more honourable (element)" and slightly spoke of the Emigrants as the "meaner" element that had intruded from outside.

... وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٨)

But honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers;

but the Hypocrites know not.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ...

9. O ye who believe!

let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah.

... وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٩)

If any act thus, the loss is their own.

C5476. Riches and human resources of all kinds are but fleeting sources of enjoyment. They should not turn away the good man from his devotion to Allah.

"Remembrance of Allah" includes every act of service and goodness, every kind thought and kind deed, for this is the service and sacrifice which Allah requires of us. If we fail in this, the loss is our own, not any one else's: for it stunts our own spiritual growth.

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ ...

10. And spend something (in charity) out of the **substance** which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you

C5477. "Substance" or "Sustenance". Whatever good we enjoy comes from Allah, and it is our duty to use some of it in the service of others, for that is Charity and the service of Allah. Every unselfish act is Charity. And we must not postpone our good resolutions to the future. Death may come suddenly on us, and we cannot then be allowed to plead for more time. Every present moment calls urgently for its good deed.

... فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِّنَ

الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠)

and he should say,

"O my Lord! why didst thou not give me respite for a little while?

I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good."

وَلَنْ يُؤَخَّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا ...

11. But to no soul will Allah grant respite when the time appointed (for it) has come:

C5478. When our limited period of probation is over, we cannot justly ask for more time, nor will more time be given to us then. Procrastination is itself a fault, and Allah knows every hidden thought and motive in our minds.

... وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١١)

and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.