

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE  
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 83

SURAH AL-MUTAFFIFIN

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

[www.quran.live](http://www.quran.live)

**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**083**

**SURAH AL-MUTAFFIFIN**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

**Introduction and Summary**

This Surah is close in time to the last one and the next one.

It condemn all fraud-in daily dealings, as well as and especially in matters of religious and higher spiritual Life.

**C.263 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

*Shun Fraud in all things: in little  
Things of daily life, but specially  
In those subtler forms of higher life,*

*Which will be exposed to view at Judgement,  
However hidden they may be  
In this life. Give everyone his due  
For the Record of ill deeds and good  
Is fully kept, and the stains of sin  
Corrupt the soul. Reject not the Real  
Now, nor mock: for the time will come  
When the True will come to its own, and then  
The mighty arrogant will be abased!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ (۱)

1. **Woe to those that deal in fraud --**

**C6011. "Fraud"** must here be taken in a widely general sense. It covers giving short measure or short weight, but it covers much more than that.

The next two verses make it clear that it is the spirit of injustice that is condemned, giving too little and asking too much.

This may be shown in commercial dealings, where a man exacts a higher standard in his own favour than he is willing to concede as against him.

In domestic or social matters an individual or group may ask for honour, or respect, or services which he or they are not willing to give on their side in similar circumstances. It is worse than one-sided selfishness: for it is double injustice. But it is worst of all in religion or spiritual life: with what face can a man ask for Mercy or Love from Allah when he is unwilling to give it to his fellow-men?

In one aspect this is a statement of the Golden Rule.

'Do as you would be done by'.

But it is more completely expressed. You must give in full what is due from you, whether you expect or wish to receive full consideration from the other side or not.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا كَانُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ (٢)

2. Those who, when they have to receive by measure, from men, exact full measure.

وَإِذَا كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَوْ وَرَثَهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ (٣)

3. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due.

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ (٤)

4. Do they not think that they will be called to account? --

**C6012.** Legal and social sanctions against Fraud depend for their efficacy on whether there is a chance of being found out. Moral and religious sanctions are of a different kind.

'Do you wish to degrade your own nature?'

'Do you not consider that there is a Day of Account before a Judge Who knows all, and Who safeguards all interests, for He is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds? Whether other people know anything about your wrong or not, you are guilty before Allah'.

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٥)

5. On a Mighty Day,

يَوْمَ يَوْمُ النَّاسِ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦)

6. A Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفَجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ (٧)

7. Nay! Surely the Record of the Wicked is (preserved) in **Sijjin**,

**C6013.** This is a word from the same root as **Sijn**, a Prison. It rhymes with and is contrasted with **Illiyin** in verse 18 below. It is therefore understood by many Commentators to be a place, a Prison or a Dungeon in

which the Wicked are confined pending their appearance before the Judgment-Seat.

The mention of the Inscribed Register in verse 9 below may imply that **Sijjin** is the name of the Register of Black Deeds, though verse 9 may be elliptical and may only describe the place by the significance of its contents.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَجِّينٌ (٨)

8. And what will explain to thee what **Sijjin** is?

كِتَابٌ مَّرْفُومٌ (٩)

9. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed.

**C6014.** If we take **Sijjin** to be the Register itself, and not the place where it is kept, the Register itself is a sort of Prison for those who do wrong.

It is **inscribed** fully: i.e., no one is omitted who ought to be there, and for every entry there is a complete record, so that there is no escape for the sinner. (R).

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٠)

10. Woe, that Day, to those that deny --

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (١١)

11. Those that deny the Day of Judgment.

**C6015.** The fact of Personal Responsibility for each soul is so undoubted that people who deny it are to be pitied, and will indeed be in a most pitiable condition on the Day of Reckoning, and none but the most abandoned sinner can deny it, and he only denies it by playing with Falsehoods.

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (١٢)

12. And none can deny it but the Transgressor beyond bounds, the Sinner!

إِذَا تُنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣)

13. When Our Signs are rehearsed to him, he says,  
"Tales of the Ancients!"

**C6016.** Cf. 6:25; 68:15; etc.

They scorn Truth and pretend that it is Falsehood.

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤)

14. By no means! but on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do!

**C6017.** The heart of man, as created by Allah, is pure and unsullied.

Every time that a man does an ill deed, it marks a stain or rust on his heart. But on repentance and forgiveness, such stain is washed off.

If there is no repentance and forgiveness, the stains deepen and spread more and more, until the heart is scaled (2:7), and eventually the man dies a spiritual death.

It is such stains that stand in the way of his perceiving Truths which are obvious to others. That is why he mocks at Truth and hugs Falsehood to his bosom.

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ (١٥)

15. Verily, from (the Light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.

**C6018.** The stain of evil deeds on their hearts sullies the mirror of their hearts, so that it does not receive the light. At Judgment the true Light, the Glory of the Lord, the joy of the Righteous, will be hidden by veils from the eyes of the Sinful. Instead, the Fire of Punishment will be to them the only reality which they will perceive.

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ (١٦)

16. Further, they will enter the Fire of Hell.

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (١٧)

17. Further, it will be said to them:

"This is the (reality) which ye rejected as false!"

كُلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عَلِيِّنَ (١٨)

18. Nay, verily the Record of the Righteous is (preserved) in 'Illiyin.

**C6019.** 'Illiyin: the oblique form of the nominative *Illiyun*, which occurs in the next verse.

It is in contrast to the **Sijjin** which occurs in verse 7 above, where see [n. 6213](#).

Literally, it means the 'High Places'.

Applying the reasoning parallel to that which we applied to **Sijjin**, we may interpret it as the Place where is kept the Register of the Righteous.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عَلِيُّنَ (١٩)

19. And what will explain to thee what 'Illiyin is?

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (٢٠)

20. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed.

**C6020.** This repeats verse 9 above, where see [n. 6014](#). But the Register is of the opposite kind, that of the Righteous. It contains every detail of the Righteous. (R).

يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُعَرَّبُونَ (٢١)

21. To which bear witness those Nearest (to Allah).

**C6021.** See 56:11, n. 5227; also n. 5223.

Those Nearest to Allah will be witnesses to this Righteous Record; or as it may also be rendered, they will be present at the Record, and watch this Record.

Metaphorically, the highest spiritual dignitaries are always helping and assisting at the piling up of the good record of every soul that strives for good, however humble in rank that soul may be.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (٢٢)

22. Truly the Righteous will be in Bliss:

عَلَى الْأَرْئِكَ يَنْظُرُونَ (٢٣)

23. On Thrones (of Dignity) will they command a sight (of all things):

**C6022.** Cf. 36:56.

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ (٢٤)

24. Thou wilt recognize in their Faces the beaming brightness of Bliss.

**C6023.** Cf. 75:22, and 76:11.

يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ (٢٥)

25. Their thirst will be slaked with Pure Wine sealed:

**C6024.** The Wine will be of the utmost purity and flavour, so precious that it will be protected with a **seal**, and the seal itself will be of the costly material of musk, which is most highly esteemed in the East for its perfume.

Perhaps a better interpretation of the "**seal**" is to take it as implying the final effect of the drink: just as a seal close a document, so the seal of the drink will be the final effect of the delicious perfume and flavour of musk, heightening the enjoyment and helping in the digestion. (R).

خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (٢٦)

26. The seal thereof will be Musk:

and for this let those aspire, who have aspirations:

**C6025.** If you understand true and lasting values, this is the kind of pure Bliss to aspire, for, and not the fleeting enjoyments of this world, which always leave a sting behind.

وَمِزَاجُهُ مِنَ التَّسْنِيمِ (٢٧)

27. With it will be (given) a mixture of **Tasnim**:

**C6026.** **Tasnim** literally indicates height, fullness, opulence.

Here it is the name of a heavenly Fountain, whose drink is superior to that of the Purest Wine.

It is the nectar drunk by Those Nearest to Allah (n. 5227 to 56:11), but a flavour of it will be given to all.



See n. 5835 to 76:5 (Kafur fountain), and n. 5849 to 76:17-18 (Salsabil). (R).

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢٨)

28. A spring, from (the waters) whereof drink those Nearest to Allah.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ (٢٩)

29. Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed,

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ (٣٠)

30. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery);

وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (٣١)

31. And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting;

وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ (٣٢)

32. And whenever they saw them, they would say,  
"Behold! these are the people truly astray!"

**C6027.** The wicked laugh at the righteous in this world in many ways:

- They inwardly laugh at their Faith, because they feel themselves so superior.
- In public places, when the righteous pass, they wink at each other and insult them.
- In their own houses they run them down.
- Whenever and wherever they see them, they reproach them with being fools who have lost their way, when the boot is really on the other leg.

In the Hereafter all these tricks and falsehoods will be shown for what they are, and the tables will be reversed.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ (٣٣)

33. But they had not been sent as Keepers over them!

**C6028.** But the wicked critics of the Righteous have no call in any case to sit in judgment over them. Who set them as Keepers or guardians over the Righteous? Let them look to their own condition and future first.

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ (٣٤)

34. But on this Day the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers.

**C6029.** The tables will then be reversed, and he laughs best who laughs last.

عَلَى الثَّرَائِكِ يُنظَرُونَ (٣٥)

35. On Thrones (of Dignity) they will command (a sight) (of all things).

**C6030.** A repetition of verse 23 above, but with a different shade of meaning.

The Righteous on their raised couches will be able to see all the true values restored in their own favour: but they will also see something else: they will also see the arrogant braggarts brought low, who brought about their own downfall by their own actions.

هَلْ تُؤْتَى الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

36. Will not the Unbelievers have been paid back for what they did?