

Sūrah 9: at-Tawbah

This is the only Sūrah of the Qur'ān to which 'In the Name of God, Most Gracious Most Merciful' is not prefixed. Though the commentators have given different reasons for this, the correct one that which has been given by Imām Razi: namely this is because the Prophet himself did not dictate it at the beginning of the Sūrah. Therefore the Companions did not prefix it and their successors followed them. This is a further proof of the fact that utmost care has been taken to keep the Qur'ān intact so that it should remain in its complete and original form.

Discourses and Periods of Revelation

This Sūrah comprises three discourses. The first discourse (v. 1-37) was revealed in Dhul-Qa'adah 9 A.H. or thereabout. As the importance of the subject of the discourse required its declaration on the occasion of Hajj the Prophet dispatched Ali to follow Abu Bakr who had already left for Makkah as leader of the Pilgrims to the Ka'bāh. He instructed Ali to deliver the discourse before the representatives of the different clans of Arabia so as to inform them of the new policy towards the polytheists.

The second discourse (v. 38-72) was sent down in Rajab 9 A.H. or a little before this when the Prophet was engaged in making preparations for the Campaign of Tabūk. In this discourse the Believers were urged to take active part in Jihād.

The third discourse (v. 73-129) was revealed on his return from the Campaign of Tabūk. There are some pieces in this discourse that were sent down on different occasions during the same period and were afterwards consolidated by the Prophet into the Sūrah in accordance with inspiration from God. But this caused no interruption in its continuity because they dealt with the same subject and formed part of the same series of events. This discourse warns the hypocrites of their evil deeds and rebukes those Believers who had stayed behind in the Campaign of Tabūk. Then after taking them to task God pardons those true Believers who had not taken part in the Jihād in the Way of God for one reason or the other.

Historical Background

The series of events that have been discussed in this Sūrah took place after the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyah. By that time one-third of Arabia had come under the sway of Islām which had established itself as a powerful well organized and civilized Islāmic State. There were two important events that followed - the first was the Conquest of Arabia. The Prophet was able to send missions among different clans for the propagation of Islām. The result was that during the short period of two years it became such a great power that it made the old order of ignorance feel helpless before it. So much so that the zealous elements from among the Quraysh were so exasperated that they broke the Treaty in order to encounter Islām in a decisive combat. But the Prophet took prompt action after the breach so as not to allow them any opportunity to gather enough force for this. He made a sudden invasion on Makkah in the month of Ramadan in 8 A.H. and conquered it. Though this conquest broke the backbone of the order of ignorance it made still another attack on Islām in the battlefield of Hunain which proved to be its death-knell. The clans of Hawazin, Tha'qif, Naur Jushm and others gathered their entire forces in the battlefield in order to crush the reformatory Revolution but they utterly failed in their evil designs. The defeat of 'ignorance' at Hunain paved the way for making the whole of Arabia the 'Abode of Islām' (Dar-ul-Islām). The result was that hardly a year had passed after the Battle of Hunain when the major portion of Arabia came within the fold of Islām and only a few upholders of the old order remained scattered over some corners of the country.

The second event that contributed towards making Islām a formidable power was the Campaign of Tabūk which was necessitated by the provocative activities of the Christians living within or near the boundaries of the Roman Empire to the north of Arabia. Accordingly the Prophet with an army of thirty thousand

marched boldly towards the Roman Empire but the Romans evaded the encounter. The result was that the power of the Prophet and Islām increased manifold and deputations from all corners of Arabia began to wait upon him on his return from Tabūk in order to offer their allegiance to Islām and obedience to him. The Qurʾān has described this triumph in Sūrah an-Nasr (s. 110): **“When the victory of God has come and the conquest, And you see the people entering into the religion of God in multitudes...”**

Campaign to Tabūk

The Campaign to Tabūk was the result of conflict with the Roman Empire that had started even before the conquest of Makkah. One of the missions sent after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah to different parts of Arabia visited the clans which lived in the northern areas adjacent to Syria. The majority of these people were Christians who were under the influence of the Roman Empire. Contrary to all the principles of the commonly accepted international law they killed fifteen members of the delegation near a place known as Zat-u-Talah. Only Kaʿab bin Umair Ghifari, the head of the delegation, succeeded in escaping and reporting the sad incident. Besides this Shurahbil bin Amr, the Christian governor of Busra who was directly under the Roman Caesar had also put to death Haritli bin Umair the ambassador of the Prophet who had been sent to him on a similar mission.

These events convinced the Prophet that a strong action should be taken in order to make the territory adjacent to the Roman Empire safe and secure for the Muslims. Accordingly in the month of Jamadi-ul-Ula 8 A.H. he sent an army of three thousand towards the Syrian border. When this army reached near Maʿan the Muslims learnt that Shurahbil was marching with an army of one hundred thousand to fight with them and that the Caesar who himself was at Hims had sent another army consisting of one hundred thousand soldiers under his brother Theodore. But in spite of such fearful news the brave small band of the Muslims marched on fearlessly and encountered the big army of Shurahbil at Mʿutah. And the result of the encounter in which the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds (the ratio of the two armies was 1:33) as very favorable for the enemy utterly failed to defeat them. This proved very helpful for the propagation of Islām. As a result those Arabs who were living in a state of semi-independence in Syria and near Syria and the clans of Najd near Iraq who were under the influence of the Persian Empire turned towards Islām and embraced it in thousands. For example the people of Bani Sulaim (whose chief was Abbas bin Mirdas Sulaimi) Ashjaʿa Ghatafan Zubyan Fazarah etc. came into the fold of Islām at the same time. Above all Farvah bin ʿAmral Juzami who was the commander of the Arab armies of the Roman Empire embraced Islām during that time and underwent the trial of his Faith in a way that filled the whole territory with wonder. When the Caesar came to know that Farvah had embraced Islām he ordered that he should be arrested and brought to his court. Then the Caesar said to him, ‘You will have to choose one of the two things. Either give up your Islām and win your liberty and your former rank or remain a Muslim and face death.’ He calmly chose Islām and sacrificed his life in the way of the Truth.

No wonder that such events as these made the Caesar realize the nature of the danger that was threatening his Empire from Arabia. Accordingly in 9 A.H. he began to make military preparations to avenge the insult he had suffered at Mʿutah. The Ghassanid and other Arab chiefs also began to muster armies under him. When the Prophet who always kept himself well-informed even of the minutest things that could affect the Islāmic Movement favorably or adversely came to know of these preparations he at once understood their meaning. Therefore without the least hesitation he decided to fight against the great power of the Caesar. He knew that the show of the slightest weakness would result in the utter failure of the Movement which was facing three great dangers at that time. First the dying power of ‘ignorance’ that had almost been crushed in the battlefield of Hunain might revive again. Secondly the Hypocrites of Madinah who were always on the look-out for such an opportunity might make full use of this to do the greatest possible harm to it. For they had already made preparations for this and had through a monk called Abu Amir, sent secret messages of their evil designs to the Christian king of Ghassan and the Caesar himself. Besides this, they had also built a mosque near Madinah for holding secret meetings for this purpose. The third danger was of an attack by the Caesar himself, who had already defeated Persia, the other great power of that period, and filled with awe the

adjacent territories. It is obvious that if all these three elements had been given an opportunity of taking a concerted action against the Muslims, Islām would have lost the fight it had almost won. That is why in this case the Prophet made an open declaration for making preparations for the Campaign against the Roman Empire, which was one of the two greatest empires of the world of that period. The declaration was made though all the apparent circumstances were against such a decision: for there was famine in the country and the long awaited crops were about to ripen: the burning heat of the scorching summer season of Arabia was at its height and there was not enough money for preparations in general, and for equipment and conveyance in particular. But in spite of these handicaps, when the Messenger of God realized the urgency of the occasion, he took this step which was to decide whether the Mission of the Truth was going to survive or perish. The very fact that he made an open declaration for making preparations for such a campaign to Syria against the Roman Empire showed how important it was, for this was contrary to his previous practice. Usually he took every precaution not to reveal beforehand the direction to which he was going nor the name of the enemy whom he was going to attack; nay, he did not move out of Madinah even in the direction of the campaign.

All the parties in Arabia fully realized the grave consequences of this critical decision. The remnants of the lovers of the old order of 'ignorance' were anxiously waiting for the result of the Campaign, for they had pinned all their hopes on the defeat of Islām by the Romans. The 'hypocrites' also considered it to be their last chance of crushing the power of Islām by internal rebellion, if the Muslims suffered a defeat in Syria. They had, therefore, made full use of the Mosque built by them for hatching plots and had employed all their devices to render the Campaign a failure. On the other side, the true Believers also realized fully that the fate of the Movement for which they had been exerting their utmost for the last 22 years was now hanging in the balance. If they showed courage on that critical occasion, the doors of the whole outer world would be thrown open for the Movement to spread. But if they showed weakness or cowardice, then all the work they had done in Arabia would end in smoke. That is why these lovers of Islām began to make enthusiastic preparations for the Campaign. Everyone of them tried to surpass the other in making contributions for the provision of equipment for it. Uthman and Abdur Rahman bin awf presented large sums of money for this purpose. Umar contributed half of the earnings of his life and Abu Bakr the entire earnings of his life. The indigent Companions did not lag behind and presented whatever they could earn by the sweat of their labor and the women parted with their ornaments. Thousands of volunteers, who were filled with the desire of sacrificing their lives for Islām, came to the Prophet and requested that arrangements for weapons and conveyance be made for them so that they should join the expedition. Those who could not be provided with these shed tears of sorrow; the scene was so pathetic that it made the Prophet sad because of his inability to arm them. In short, the occasion became the touchstone for discriminating a true believer from a hypocrite. For, to lag behind in the Campaign meant that the very relationship of a person to Islām was doubtful. Accordingly, whenever a person lagged behind during the journey to Tabūk, the Prophet, on being informed, would spontaneously say, *"Leave him alone. If there be any good in him, God will again join him with you, and if there be no good in him, then thank God that He relieved you of his evil company."*

In short, the Prophet marched out towards Syria in Rajab A.H. 9, with thirty thousand fighters for the cause of Islām. The conditions in which the expedition was undertaken may be judged from the fact that the number of camels with them was so small that many of them were obliged to walk on foot and to wait for their turns for several had to ride at a time on each camel. To add to this, there was the burning heat of the desert and the acute shortage of water. But they were richly rewarded for their firm resolve and sincere adherence to the cause and for their perseverance in the face of those great difficulties and obstacles.

When they arrived at Tabūk, they learnt that the Caesar and his allies had withdrawn their troops from the frontier and there was no enemy to fight with. Thus they won a moral victory that increased their prestige manifold and, that too, without shedding a drop of blood. As a result of this, the boundaries of the Islāmic State were extended right up to the Roman Empire, and the majority of the Arab clans, who were being used by the Caesar against Arabia, became the allies of the Muslims against the Romans. Above all, this moral victory of Tabūk afforded a golden opportunity to the Muslims to strengthen their hold on Arabia before

entering into a long conflict with the Romans. For it broke the back of those who had still been expecting that the old order of 'ignorance' might revive in the near future, whether they were the open upholders of shirk or the hypocrites who were hiding their shirk under the garb of Islām. The majority of such people were compelled by the force of circumstances to enter into the fold of Islām and, at least, make it possible for their descendants to become true Muslims. After this a mere impotent minority of the upholders of the old order was left in the field, but it could not stand in the way of the Islāmic Revolution for the perfection of which God had sent His Messenger.

Problems of the Period

If we keep in view the preceding background we can easily find out the problems that were confronting the Community at that time. They were: (1) to make the whole of Arabia a perfect Dar-ul-Islām (2) to extend the influence of Islām to the adjoining countries (3) to crush the mischiefs of the hypocrites and (4) to prepare the Muslims for Jihād against the non-Muslim world. A clear declaration was made that all the treaties with the polytheists were abolished and the Muslims would be released from the treaty obligations with them after a respite of four months (v. 1-3). This declaration was necessary for uprooting completely the system of life based on Shirk (polytheism) and to make Arabia exclusively the center of Islām so that it should not in any way interfere with the spirit of Islām nor become an internal danger for it.

A decree was issued that the guardianship of the Ka'bāh, which held central position in all the affairs of Arabia should be wrested from the polytheists and placed permanently in the hands of the Believers (v. 12-18) and that all the customs and practices of the shirk of the era of 'ignorance' should be forcibly abolished: that the polytheists should not be allowed even to come near the "House" (v. 28). This was to eradicate every trace of Shirk from the "House" that was dedicated exclusively to the worship of God. In order to enable the Muslims to extend the influence of Islām outside Arabia they were enjoined to crush with sword the non-Muslim powers and to force them to accept the sovereignty of the Islāmic State. As the great Roman and Persian Empires were the biggest hindrances in the way a conflict with them was inevitable. The object of Jihād was not to coerce them to accept Islām; they were free to accept or not to accept it, but to prevent them from thrusting forcibly their deviations upon others and the coming generations. The Muslims were enjoined to tolerate their misguidance only to the extent that they might have the freedom to remain misguided if they chose to be so provided that they paid Jizyah (v. 29) as a sign of their subjugation to the Islāmic State. The third important problem was to crush the mischiefs of the hypocrites who had hitherto been tolerated in spite of their flagrant crimes. Now that there was practically no pressure upon them from outside the Muslims were enjoined to treat them openly as disbelievers (v. 73). Accordingly the Prophet set on fire the house of Swailim where the hypocrites used to gather for consultations in order to dissuade the people from joining the expedition to Tabūk. Likewise on his return from Tabūk he ordered to pull down and burn the 'Mosque' that had been built to serve as a cover for the hypocrites for hatching plots against the true Believers.

In order to prepare the Muslims for Jihād against the whole non-Muslim world it was necessary to cure them even of that slight weakness of faith from which they were still suffering. For there could be no greater internal danger to the Islāmic Community than the weakness of faith especially where it was going to engage itself single-handed in a conflict with the whole non-Muslim world. That is why those people who had lagged behind in the Campaign to Tabūk or had shown the least negligence were severely taken to task and were considered as hypocrites if they had no plausible excuse for not fulfilling that obligation. Moreover, a clear declaration was made that in future the sole criterion of a Muslim's faith shall be the exertions he makes for the uplift of the Word of God and the role he plays in the conflict between Islām and Kufr (disbelief). Therefore, if anyone will show any hesitation in sacrificing his life, money, time and energies, his faith shall not be regarded as genuine (v. 81-96). If the above-mentioned important points are kept in view during the study of this Sūrah, it will facilitate the understanding of its contents.

Sūrah 9: at-Tawbah⁴²³

1. [This is a declaration of] disassociation, from God and His Messenger, to those with whom you had made a treaty among the polytheists.⁴²⁴
2. So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout the land [during] four months but know that you cannot cause failure to God and that God will disgrace the disbelievers.
3. And [it is] an announcement from God and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage⁴²⁵ that God is disassociated from the disbelievers, and [so is] His Messenger. So if you repent, that is best for you; but if you turn away - then know that you will not cause failure to God.⁴²⁶ And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful punishment.
4. Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, God loves the righteous [who fear Him].
5. And when the sacred months⁴²⁷ have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakāh, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
6. And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of God [i.e., the Qur'ān]. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.
7. How can there be for the polytheists a treaty in the sight of God and with His Messenger, except for those with whom you made a treaty at al-Masjid al-Harām? So as long as they are upright toward you,⁴²⁸ be upright toward them. Indeed, God loves the righteous [who fear Him].
8. How [can there be a treaty] while, if they gain dominance over you, they do not observe concerning you any pact of kinship or covenant of protection? They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.
9. They have exchanged the signs of God for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.
10. They do not observe toward a believer any pact of kinship or covenant of protection. And it is they who are the transgressors.
11. But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakāh, then they are your brothers in religion; and We detail the verses for a people who know.

⁴²³ *At-Tawbah*: Repentance. This *sūrah* is also known as *Bara'ah*, meaning disassociation, freedom, release or immunity. The words *In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful* were not revealed at the beginning of this *sūrah*.

⁴²⁴ But who had violated it.

⁴²⁵ *Hajj*. *Umrab* is the lesser pilgrimage.

⁴²⁶ i.e., you cannot escape His punishment.

⁴²⁷ The four months mentioned in verse 2, i.e., Muharram, Rajab, Dhul-Qa'dah and Dhul-Hijjah.

⁴²⁸ i.e., maintain the terms of the treaty.

12. And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief, for indeed, there are no oaths [sacred] to them; [fight them that] they might cease.
13. Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and determined to expel the Messenger, and they had begun [the attack upon] you the first time? Do you fear them? But God has more right that you should fear Him, if you are [truly] believers.
14. Fight them; God will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts [i.e., desires] of a believing people
15. And remove the fury in their [i.e., the believers'] hearts. And God turns in forgiveness to whom He wills; and God is Knowing and Wise.
16. Do you think that you will be left [as you are] while God has not yet made evident those among you who strive [for His cause] and do not take other than God, His Messenger and the believers as intimates? And God is Acquainted with what you do.
17. It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of God [while] witnessing against themselves with disbelief. [For] those, their deeds have become worthless, and in the Fire they will abide eternally.
18. The mosques of God are only to be maintained by those who believe in God and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakāh and do not fear except God, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.
19. Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Harām equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in God and the Last Day and strives in the cause of God? They are not equal in the sight of God. And God does not guide the wrongdoing people.
20. The ones who have believed, emigrated and striven in the cause of God with their wealth and their lives are greater in rank in the sight of God. And it is those who are the attainers [of success].
21. Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and approval and of gardens for them wherein is enduring pleasure.
22. [They will be] abiding therein forever. Indeed, God has with Him a great reward.
23. O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.
24. Say, [O Muhammad], "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and jihād [i.e., striving] in His cause, then wait until God executes His command. And God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people."
25. God has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at

- all, and the earth was confining for you with [i.e., in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing.
26. Then God sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldiers [i.e., angels] whom you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers.
27. Then God will accept repentance after that for whom He wills; and God is Forgiving and Merciful.
28. O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Harām after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, God will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, God is Knowing and Wise.
29. Fight those who do not believe in God or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what God and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth [i.e., Islām] from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the *jizyah*⁴²⁹ willingly while they are humbled.
30. The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of God"; and the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of God." That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before [them]. May God destroy them; how are they deluded?
31. They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides God,⁴³⁰ and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary.⁴³¹ And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him.
32. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God refuses except to perfect His light, although the disbelievers dislike it.
33. It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with God dislike it.
34. O you who have believed, indeed many of the scholars and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly⁴³² and avert [them] from the way of God. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God - give them tidings of a painful punishment.
35. The Day when it⁴³³ will be heated in the fire of Hell and seared therewith will be their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, [it will be said], "This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard."
36. Indeed, the number of months with God is twelve [lunar] months in the register of God [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred.⁴³⁴ That is the

⁴²⁹ A tax required of non-Muslims exempting them from military service and entitling them to the protection of the Islāmic state. Concurrently, *zakah* is not taken from them, being an obligation only upon Muslims.

⁴³⁰ By their obedience to them rather than to what God ordained.

⁴³¹ By their worship of him in conjunction with God.

⁴³² i.e., through false pretence.

⁴³³ The gold and silver which was hoarded, i.e., whose *zakah* was not paid.

⁴³⁴ See footnote to 9:5.

- correct religion [i.e., way], so do not wrong yourselves during them.⁴³⁵ And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively. And know that God is with the righteous [who fear Him].
37. Indeed, the postponing [of restriction within sacred months] is an increase in disbelief by which those who have disbelieved are led [further] astray. They make it⁴³⁶ lawful one year and unlawful another year to correspond to the number made unlawful by God⁴³⁷ and [thus] make lawful what God has made unlawful. Made pleasing to them is the evil of their deeds; and God does not guide the disbelieving people.
38. O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of God, you adhere heavily to the earth?⁴³⁸ Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little.
39. If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. And God is over all things competent.
40. If you do not aid him [i.e., the Prophet] - God has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two,⁴³⁹ when they were in the cave and he [i.e., Muhammad] said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed God is with us." And God sent down his tranquillity upon him and supported him with soldiers [i.e., angels] you did not see and made the word⁴⁴⁰ of those who disbelieved the lowest,⁴⁴¹ while the word of God⁴⁴² - that is the highest. And God is Exalted in Might and Wise.
41. Go forth, whether light or heavy,⁴⁴³ and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of God. That is better for you, if you only knew.
42. Had it been a near [i.e., easy] gain and a moderate trip, they [i.e., the hypocrites] would have followed you, but distant to them was the journey. And they will swear by God,⁴⁴⁴ "If we were able, we would have gone forth with you," destroying themselves [through false oaths], and God knows that indeed they are liars.
43. May God pardon you, [O Muhammad]; why did you give them permission [to remain behind]? [You should not have] until it was evident to you who were truthful and you knew [who were] the liars.
44. Those who believe in God and the Last Day would not ask permission of you to be excused from striving [i.e., fighting] with their wealth and their lives.

⁴³⁵ i.e., do not violate the sacred months or commit aggression therein.

⁴³⁶ Fighting during a sacred month.

⁴³⁷ If they found it advantageous to violate a sacred month, they would do so, designating another month in its place in which to observe the restrictions concerning fighting.

⁴³⁸ i.e., inclining toward the comforts of worldly life.

⁴³⁹ The second was his companion, Abu Bakr.

⁴⁴⁰ i.e., their claims and slogans.

⁴⁴¹ i.e., degraded and dishonoured.

⁴⁴² "*La ilaha ill-Allah*" ("There is no deity worthy of worship except God").

⁴⁴³ i.e., young or old, riding or walking, in ease or in hardship - in all circumstances and conditions.

⁴⁴⁴ When you return from the Tabūk expedition.

- And God is Knowing of those who fear Him.
45. Only those would ask permission of you who do not believe in God and the Last Day and whose hearts have doubted, and they, in their doubt, are hesitating.
46. And if they had intended to go forth, they would have prepared for it [some] preparation. But God disliked their being sent, so He kept them back, and they were told, "Remain [behind] with those who remain."⁴⁴⁵
47. Had they gone forth with you, they would not have increased you except in confusion, and they would have been active among you, seeking [to cause] you fitnah [i.e., chaos and dissension]. And among you are avid listeners to them. And God is Knowing of the wrongdoers.
48. They had already desired dissension before and had upset matters for you⁴⁴⁶ until the truth came and the ordinance [i.e., victory] of God appeared, while they were averse.
49. And among them is he who says, "Permit me [to remain at home] and do not put me to trial." Unquestionably, into trial they have fallen.⁴⁴⁷ And indeed, Hell will encompass the disbelievers.
50. If good befalls you, it distresses them; but if disaster strikes you, they say, "We took our matter [in hand] before,"⁴⁴⁸ and turn away while they are rejoicing.
51. Say, "Never will we be struck except by what God has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon God let the believers rely.
52. Say, "Do you await for us except one of the two best things [i.e., martyrdom or victory] while we await for you that God will afflict you with punishment from Himself or at our hands? So wait; indeed we, along with you, are waiting."
53. Say, "Spend willingly or unwillingly; never will it be accepted from you. Indeed, you have been a defiantly disobedient people."
54. And what prevents their expenditures from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in God and in His Messenger and that they come not to prayer except while they are lazy and that they do not spend except while they are unwilling.
55. So let not their wealth or their children impress you. God only intends to punish them through them in worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.
56. And they swear by God that they are from among you while they are not from among you; but they are a people who are afraid.
57. If they could find a refuge or some caves or any place to enter [and hide], they would turn to it while they run heedlessly.

⁴⁴⁵ i.e., the women and children.

⁴⁴⁶ Or "turned matters related to you over [in their minds, considering how to cause you failure]."

⁴⁴⁷ By avoiding their obligation, they fell into destruction.

⁴⁴⁸ The hypocrites claim to have protected themselves by remaining behind.

58. And among them are some who criticize you concerning the [distribution of] charities. If they are given from them, they approve; but if they are not given from them, at once they become angry.
59. If only they had been satisfied with what God and His Messenger gave them and said, "Sufficient for us is God; God will give us of His bounty, and [so will] His Messenger; indeed, we are desirous toward God,"⁴⁴⁹ [it would have been better for them].
60. Zakāh expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakāh] and for bringing hearts together [for Islām] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of God and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by God. And God is Knowing and Wise.
61. And among them are those who abuse the Prophet and say, "He is an ear."⁴⁵⁰ Say, "[It is] an ear of goodness for you that believes in God and believes the believers and [is] a mercy to those who believe among you." And those who abuse the Messenger of God - for them is a painful punishment.
62. They swear by God to you [Muslims] to satisfy you. But God and His Messenger are more worthy for them to satisfy, if they should be believers.
63. Do they not know that whoever opposes God and His Messenger - that for him is the fire of Hell, wherein he will abide eternally? That is the great disgrace.
64. The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a sūrah be revealed about them, informing them of⁴⁵¹ what is in their hearts. Say, "Mock [as you wish]; indeed, God will expose that which you fear."
65. And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it God and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?"
66. Make no excuse; you have disbelieved [i.e., rejected faith] after your belief. If We pardon one faction of you - We will punish another faction because they were criminals.
67. The hypocrite men and hypocrite women are of one another. They enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right and close their hands.⁴⁵² They have forgotten God, so He has forgotten them [accordingly]. Indeed, the hypocrites - it is they who are the defiantly disobedient.
68. God has promised the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers the fire of Hell, wherein they will abide eternally. It is sufficient for them. And God has cursed them, and for them is an enduring punishment.
69. [You disbelievers are] like those before you; they were stronger than you in power and more abundant in wealth and children. They enjoyed their portion [of worldly enjoyment], and you have enjoyed your portion as those before you enjoyed their portion, and you have engaged [in vanities] like that in which they engaged. [It is] those whose deeds have become worthless in this

⁴⁴⁹ Meaning "We desire God and His grace and acceptance," or "We desire whatever God wills to give us of His bounty."

⁴⁵⁰ i.e., one who believes everything he hears.

⁴⁵¹ i.e., exposing the truth about.

⁴⁵² i.e., refuse to spend in the way of God.

- world and in the Hereafter, and it is they who are the losers.
70. Has there not reached them the news of those before them - the people of Noah and [the tribes of] ‘Aad and Thamūd and the people of Abraham and the companions [i.e., dwellers] of Madyan and the towns overturned?⁴⁵³ Their messengers came to them with clear proofs. And God would never have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves.
71. The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakāh and obey God and His Messenger. Those - God will have mercy upon them. Indeed, God is Exalted in Might and Wise.
72. God has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from God is greater. It is that which is the great attainment.
73. O Prophet, fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them. And their refuge is Hell, and wretched is the destination.
74. They swear by God that they did not say [anything against the Prophet] while they had said the word of disbelief and disbelieved after their [pretense of] Islām and planned that which they were not to attain.⁴⁵⁴ And they were not resentful except [for the fact] that God
- and His Messenger had enriched them of His bounty.⁴⁵⁵ So if they repent, it is better for them; but if they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And there will not be for them on earth any protector or helper.
75. And among them are those who made a covenant with God, [saying], “If He should give us from His bounty, we will surely spend in charity, and we will surely be among the righteous.”
76. But when He gave them from His bounty, they were stingy with it and turned away while they refused.
77. So He penalized them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the Day they will meet Him - because they failed God in what they promised Him and because they [habitually] used to lie.
78. Did they not know that God knows their secrets and their private conversations and that God is the Knower of the unseen?
79. Those who criticize the contributors among the believers concerning [their] charities and [criticize] the ones who find nothing [to spend] except their effort, so they ridicule them - God will ridicule them, and they will have a painful punishment.
80. Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will God forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in God and His Messenger,

⁴⁵³ i.e., those to which Lot was sent and which earned for themselves God’s punishment. See 11:82-83.

⁴⁵⁴ i.e., the murder of Prophet Muhammad.

⁴⁵⁵ i.e., for no reason. On the contrary, they should have been grateful.

- and God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.
81. Those who remained behind rejoiced in their staying [at home] after [the departure of] the Messenger of God and disliked to strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of God and said, "Do not go forth in the heat." Say, "The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat" - if they would but understand.
82. So let them laugh a little and [then] weep much as recompense for what they used to earn.
83. If God should return you to a faction of them [after the expedition] and then they ask your permission to go out [to battle], say, "You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy. Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time, so sit [now] with those who stay behind."
84. And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died - ever - or stand at his grave. Indeed, they disbelieved in God and His Messenger and died while they were defiantly disobedient.
85. And let not their wealth and their children impress you. God only intends to punish them through them in this world and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.
86. And when a sūrah was revealed [enjoining them] to believe in God and to fight with His Messenger, those of wealth among them asked your permission [to stay back] and said, "Leave us to be with them who sit [at home]."
87. They were satisfied to be with those who stay behind, and their hearts were sealed over, so they do not understand.
88. But the Messenger and those who believed with him fought with their wealth and their lives. Those will have [all that is] good, and it is those who are the successful.
89. God has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide eternally. That is the great attainment.
90. And those with excuses among the bedouins came to be permitted [to remain], and they who had lied⁴⁵⁶ to God and His Messenger sat [at home]. There will strike those who disbelieved among them a painful punishment.
91. There is not upon the weak or upon the ill or upon those who do not find anything to spend any discomfort [i.e., guilt] when they are sincere to God and His Messenger. There is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.
92. Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, "I can find nothing for you to ride upon." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of God].
93. The cause [for blame] is only upon those who ask permission of you while they are rich. They are satisfied to be with those who stay behind, and God has sealed over their hearts, so they do not know.

⁴⁵⁶ i.e., claimed faith.

94. They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them. Say, "Make no excuse - never will we believe you. God has already informed us of your news [i.e., affair]. And God will observe your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger; then you will be taken back to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed,⁴⁵⁷ and He will inform you of what you used to do."
95. They will swear by God to you when you return to them that you would leave them alone. So leave them alone; indeed they are evil; and their refuge is Hell as recompense for what they had been earning.
96. They swear to you so that you might be satisfied with them. But if you should be satisfied with them - indeed, God is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people.
97. The bedouins are stronger in disbelief and hypocrisy and more likely not to know the limits of what [laws] God has revealed to His Messenger. And God is Knowing and Wise.
98. And among the bedouins are some who consider what they spend as a loss⁴⁵⁸ and await for you turns of misfortune. Upon them will be a misfortune of evil. And God is Hearing and Knowing.
99. But among the bedouins are some who believe in God and the Last Day and consider what they spend as means of nearness to God and of [obtaining] invocations of the Messenger. Unquestionably, it is a means of nearness for them. God will admit them to His mercy. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
100. And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhājireen⁴⁵⁹ and the Ansār⁴⁶⁰ and those who followed them with good conduct - God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.
101. And among those around you of the bedouins are hypocrites, and [also] from the people of Madīnah. They have become accustomed to hypocrisy. You, [O Muhammad], do not know them, [but] We know them. We will punish them twice [in this world]; then they will be returned to a great punishment.
102. And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed [i.e., polluted] a righteous deed with another that was bad.⁴⁶¹ Perhaps God will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
103. Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [God's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And God is Hearing and Knowing.
104. Do they not know that it is God who accepts repentance from His servants

⁴⁵⁷ See footnote to 6:73.

⁴⁵⁸ i.e., a fine or penalty.

⁴⁵⁹ Those who emigrated from Makkah and settled in Madīnah for the cause of Islām.

⁴⁶⁰ The inhabitants of Madīnah who had accepted Islām and assisted the Prophet and other emigrants upon their arrival there.

⁴⁶¹ This refers to their having previously taken part in *jihād* but having abstained on the occasion of Tabūk.

- and receives charities and that it is God who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful?
105. And say, "Do [as you will], for God will see your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do."
106. And [there are] others deferred until the command of God - whether He will punish them or whether He will forgive them. And God is Knowing and Wise.
107. And [there are] those [hypocrites] who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against God and His Messenger before. And they will surely swear, "We intended only the best." And God testifies that indeed they are liars.
108. Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day⁴⁶² is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and God loves those who purify themselves.
109. Then is one who laid the foundation of his building on righteousness [with fear] from God and [seeking] His approval better or one who laid the foundation of his building on the edge of a bank about to collapse, so it collapsed with him into the fire of Hell? And God does not guide the wrongdoing people.
110. Their building which they built will not cease to be a [cause of] skepticism in their hearts until their hearts are cut [i.e., stopped]. And God is Knowing and Wise.
111. Indeed, God has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of God, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'ān. And who is truer to his covenant than God? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.
112. [Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of God], the travelers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] God. And give good tidings to the believers.
113. It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.
114. And the request of forgiveness of Abraham for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became apparent to him [i.e., Abraham] that he [i.e., the father] was an enemy to God, he disassociated himself from him. Indeed was Abraham compassionate and patient.
115. And God would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid. Indeed, God is Knowing of all things.

⁴⁶² This description is of the Qubā' mosque.

116. Indeed, to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He gives life and causes death. And you have not besides God any protector or any helper.
117. God has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhājireen and the Ansār who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful.
118. And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness⁴⁶³ and their souls confined [i.e., anguished] them and they were certain that there is no refuge from God except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, God is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.
119. O you who have believed, fear God and be with those who are true.
120. It was not [proper] for the people of Madīnah and those surrounding them of the bedouins that they remain behind after [the departure of] the Messenger of God or that they prefer themselves over his self.⁴⁶⁴ That is because they are not afflicted by thirst or fatigue or hunger in the cause of God, nor do they tread on any ground that enrages the disbelievers, nor do they inflict upon an enemy any infliction but that it is registered for them as a righteous deed. Indeed, God does not allow
- to be lost the reward of the doers of good.
121. Nor do they spend an expenditure, small or large, or cross a valley but that it is registered for them that God may reward them for the best of what they were doing.
122. And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn [i.e., advise] their people when they return to them that they might be cautious.
123. O you who have believed, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that God is with the righteous.
124. And whenever a sūrah is revealed, there are among them [i.e., the hypocrites] those who say, “Which of you has this increased faith?” As for those who believed, it has increased them in faith, while they are rejoicing.
125. But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it has [only] increased them in evil [in addition] to their evil.⁴⁶⁵ And they will have died while they are disbelievers.
126. Do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice but then they do not repent nor do they remember?
127. And whenever a sūrah is revealed, they look at each other, [saying], “Does anyone see you?” and then they dismiss themselves. God has dismissed their

⁴⁶³ Thus it seemed to them in their extreme distress.

⁴⁶⁴ In times of hardship. Rather, they should have been willing to endure with the Prophet whatever was necessary for Islām.

⁴⁶⁵ Literally, “filth,” i.e., disbelief and hypocrisy.

hearts because they are a people who do not understand.

128. There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.
129. But if they turn away, [O Muhammad], say, “Sufficient for me is God; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne.”