

Sūrah 24: an-Nūr

Period of Revelation

The consensus of opinion is that it was sent down after the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq and this is confirmed by v. 11-20 that deal with the incident of the "Slander" which occurred during that Campaign. But there is a difference of opinion as to whether this Campaign took place in 5 A.H. before the Battle of the Trench or in 6 A.H. after it.

Historical Background

Now let us review the circumstances existing at the time of the revelation of this Sūrah. It should be kept in mind that the incident of the "Slander" which was the occasion of its revelation was closely connected with the conflict between Islām and the disbelievers.

After the victory at Badr the Islāmic movement began to gain strength day by day; so much so that by the time of the Battle of the Trench it had become so strong that the united forces of the enemy numbering about ten thousand failed to crush it and had to raise the siege of Madinah after one month. It meant this and both the parties understood it well that the war of aggression which the Disbelievers had been waging for several years had come to an end. The Prophet himself declared: *"After this year the Quraysh will not be able to attack you; now you will take the offensive."*

When the disbelievers realized that they could not defeat Islām on the battlefield they chose the moral front to carry on the conflict. It cannot be said with certainty whether this change of tactics was the outcome of deliberate consultations or it was the inevitable result of the humiliating retreat in the Battle of the Trench for which all the available forces of the enemy had been concentrated: They knew it well that the rise of Islām was not due to the numerical strength of the Muslims, nor to their superior arms and ammunition and not to their greater material resources; nay the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds on all these fronts. They owed their success to their moral superiority. Their enemies realized that the pure and noble qualities of the Prophet and his followers were capturing the hearts of the people and were also binding them together into a highly disciplined community. As a result of this they were defeating the polytheists and the Jews both on the peace and on the war front because the latter lacked discipline and character.

Under the above mentioned circumstances the wicked designs of the disbelievers led them to start a campaign of vilification against the Prophet and the Muslims in order to destroy the bulwark of morale that was helping them to defeat their enemies. Therefore the strategy was to attain the assistance of the hypocrites to spread slanders against the Prophet and his followers so that the polytheists and the Jews could exploit these to sow the seeds of discord among the Muslims and undermine their discipline.

The first opportunity for the use of the new strategy was afforded in Dhul-Qa'dah 5 A.H. when the Prophet married Zainab (daughter of Jahsh) who was the divorced wife of his adopted son Zayd bin Harithah. The Prophet had arranged this marriage in order to put an end to the custom of ignorance which gave the same status to the adopted son that was the right only of the son from one's own loins. The hypocrites however considered it a golden opportunity to vilify the Prophet from inside the community and the Jews and the polytheists exploited it from outside to ruin his high reputation by this malicious slander. For this purpose fantastic stories were concocted and spread to this effect: *"One day Mubammad happened to see the wife of his adopted son and fell in love with her; he manouvered her divorce and married her."* Though this was an absurd fiction it was spread with such skill, cunning and artfulness that it succeeded in its purpose; so much so that some Muslim traditionalists and commentators also have cited some parts of it in their writings and the orientalist have exploited these fully to vilify the Prophet. As a matter of fact Zainab was never a stranger to the Prophet that he should see her by chance and fall in love with her at first sight. For she was his first cousin being the daughter of his real paternal aunt Umaymah daughter of Abdul Muttalib. He had known her from her

childhood to her youth. A year before this incident, he himself had persuaded her against her will to marry Zayd in order to demonstrate practically that the Quraysh and the liberated slaves were equal as human being. As she never reconciled herself to her marriage, they could not pull on together for long, which inevitably led to her divorce. The above mentioned facts were well known to all, yet the slanderers succeeded in their false propaganda with the result that even today there are people who exploit these things to defame Islām

The second slander was made on the honour of Ā'isha, a wife of the Prophet, in connection with an incident which occurred while he was returning from the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq. As this attack was even severer than the first one and was the main background of this Sūrah, we shall deal with it in greater detail.

Let us say a few words about Abdullah bin Ubayy, who played the part of a villain in this attack. He belonged to the clan of Khazraj and was one of the most important chiefs of Madinah. The people had even intended to make him their king a little before the Prophet's migration there, but the scheme had to be dropped because of the changed circumstances. Though he had embraced Islām, he remained at heart a hypocrite and his hypocrisy was so manifest that he was called the "Chief of the Hypocrites." He never lost any opportunity to slander Islām in order to take his revenge.

Now the main theme. When in Sha'aban 6 A.H. the Prophet learned that the people of Bani al-Mustaliq were making preparations for a war against the Muslims and were trying to muster other clans also for this purpose, he fore-stalled and took the enemy by surprise. After capturing the people of the clan and their belongings, the Prophet made a halt near Muraisi, a spring in their territory. One day a dispute concerning taking water from the spring started between a servant of Umar and an ally of the clan of Khazraj, and developed into a quarrel between the Muhajirs (immigrants) and the Ansār (Muslims of Madina), but was soon settled. This, however, did not suit the strategy of Abdullah bin Ubayy, who also had joined the expedition with a large number of hypocrites. So he began to incite the Ansār, saying, "*You yourselves brought these people of the Quraysh from Makkah and made them partners in your wealth and property. And now they have become your rivals and want domination over you. If even now you withdraw your support from them, they shall be forced to leave your city.*" Then he swore and declared, "*As soon as we reach back Madinah, the respectable people will turn out the degraded people from the city.*"

When the Prophet came to know of this, he ordered the people to set off immediately and march back to Madinah. The forced march continued up to noon the next day without a halt on the way so that the people became exhausted and had no time for idle talk.

Though this wise judgment and quick action by the Prophet averted the undesirable consequences of the mischief, Abdullah bin Ubayy got another opportunity for doing a far more serious and greater mischief, i.e. by engineering a "Slander" against Ā'isha, for that was a mischief which might well have involved the young Muslim Community in a civil war, if the Prophet and his sincere and devoted followers had not shown wisdom, forbearance and marvelous discipline in dealing with it. In order to understand the events that led to the incident of the "Slander," we cite the story in Ā'isha's own words. She says "*Whenever the Holy Prophet went out on a journey, he decided by lots as to which of his wives should accompany him. Accordingly, it was decided that I should accompany him during the expedition to Bani al-Mustaliq. On the return journey, the Holy Prophet halted for the night at a place which was the last stage on the way back to Madinah. It was still night, when they began to make preparations for the march. So I went outside the camp to ease myself. When I returned and came near my halting place, I noticed that my necklace had fallen down somewhere. I went back in search for it but in the meantime the caravan moved off and I was left behind all alone. The four carriers of the litter had placed it on my camel without noticing that it was empty. This happened because of my light weight due to lack of food in those days. I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down in the hope that when it would be found that I had been left behind, a search party would come back to pick me up. In the meantime I fell asleep. In the morning, when Safwan bin Mu'attal Sulami passed that way, he saw me and recognized me for he had seen me several times before the Commandment about purdah had been sent down. No sooner did he see me than he stopped his camel and cried out spontaneously: "How sad! The wife of the Holy Prophet has been left here!" At this I woke up all of a sudden and covered my face*

with my sheet. Without uttering another word, he made his camel kneel by me and stood aside, while I climbed on to the camel back. He led the camel by the nose-string and we overtook the caravan at about noon, when it had just halted and nobody had yet noticed that I had been left behind. I learnt afterwards that this incident had been used to slander me and Abdullah bin Ubayy was foremost among the slanderers.” (According to other traditions, when Ā’isha reached the camp on the camel, led by Safwan, and it was known that she had been left behind, Abdullah bin Ubayy cried out, ‘By God, she could not have remained chaste. Look, there comes the wife of your Prophet openly on the camel led by the person with whom she passed the night.’)

“When I reached Madinah, I fell ill and stayed in bed for more than a month. Though I was quite unaware of it, the news of the “Slander” was spreading like a scandal in the city, and had also reached the Holy Prophet. Anyhow, I noticed that he did not seem as concerned about my illness as he used to be. He would come but without addressing me directly, would inquire from others how I was and leave the house. Therefore it troubled my mind that something had gone wrong somewhere. So I took leave of him and went to my mother’s house for better nursing. While I was there, one night I went out of the city to ease myself in the company of Mistab’s mother, who was a first cousin of my mother. As she was walking along she stumbled over something and cried out spontaneously, ‘May Mistab perish!’ To this I retorted, ‘What a good mother you are that you curse your own son, the son who took part in the Battle of Badr.’ She replied, ‘My dear daughter, are you not aware of his scandal mongering?’ Then she told me everything about the campaign of the ‘Slander’. Hearing this horrible story, my blood curdled, and I immediately returned home, and passed the rest of the night in crying over it.

“During my absence the Holy Prophet took counsel with Ali and Usamah bin Zayd about this matter. Usamah said good words about me to this effect: ‘O Messenger of God, we have found nothing but good in your wife. All that is being spread about her is a lie and calumny.’ As regards Ali, he said, ‘O Messenger of God, there is no dearth of women; you may, if you like, marry another wife. If, however, you would like to investigate into the matter, you may send for her maid servant and inquire into it through her.’ Accordingly, the maid servant was sent for and questioned. She replied, ‘I declare on an oath by God, Who has sent you with the Truth, that I have never seen any evil thing in her, except that she falls asleep when I tell her to look after the kneaded dough in my absence and a goat comes and eats it.’ On that same day the Holy Prophet addressed the people from the pulpit, saying: ‘O Muslims, who from among you will defend my honour against the attacker of the person who has transgressed all bounds in doing harm to me by slandering my wife. By God, I have made a thorough inquiry and found nothing wrong with her nor with the man, whose name has been linked with the “Slander”.’ At this Usaïd bin Hudair (or Sa’d bin Mauz) according to other traditions) stood up and said, ‘O Messenger of God, if that person belongs to our clan, we will kill him by ourselves, but if he belongs to the Khazraj clan, we will kill him if you order us to do so.’ Hearing this Sa’d bin Ubadah, chief of the Khazraj clan, stood up and said, ‘You lie you can never kill him. You are saying this just because the person belongs to our clan of Khazraj. Had he belonged to your clan, you would never have said so.’ Usaïd retorted, ‘You are a hypocrite: that is why you are defending a hypocrite.’ At this, there was a general turmoil in the mosque, which would have developed into a riot, even though the Holy Prophet was present there the whole time. But he cooled down their anger and came down from the pulpit.”

Let us point out the enormity of the mischief that was engineered by Abdullah bin Ubayy:

1. It implied an attack on the honour of the Prophet and Abu Bakr Siddiq.
2. He meant to undermine the high moral superiority which was the greatest asset of the Islāmic Movement.
3. He intended to ignite civil war between the Muhajirs and the Ansār, and between Aus and Khazraj, the two clans of the Ansār.

Themes and Topics

This Sūrah and v. 28-73 of Sūrah al-Ahzāb (of which this is the sequel) were sent down to strengthen the moral front, which at that time was the main target of the attack, v. 28-73 of al-Ahzāb were sent down concerning the Prophet’s marriage with Zainab, and on the occasion of the second attack (the “Slander” about Ā’isha), Sūrah An-Nūr was sent down to repair the cracks that had appeared in the unity of the Muslim Community. If we keep this in view during the study of the two Sūrahs, we shall understand the wisdom that

underlies the Commandments about the Veil. God sent the following instructions to strengthen and safeguard the moral front, and to counteract the storm of propaganda that was raised on the occasion of the marriage of Zainab:

1. The wives of the Prophet were enjoined to remain within their private quarters, to avoid display of adornments and to be cautious in their talk with other persons (v. 32, 33).
2. The other Muslims were forbidden to enter the private rooms of the Prophet and instructed to ask whatever they wanted from behind the curtain (v. 53).
3. A line of demarcation was drawn between the mahram and the non-mahram relatives. Only the former were allowed to enter the private rooms of those wives of the Prophet with whom they were so closely related as to prohibit marriage with them (v. 55).
4. The Muslims were told that the wives of the Prophet were prohibited for them just like their own real mothers; therefore every Muslim should regard them with the purest of intentions (v. 53, 54).
5. The Muslims were warned that they would invite the curse and scourge of God if they offended the Prophet. Likewise it was a heinous sin to attack the honour of or slander any Muslim man or woman (v. 57, -8).
6. All the Muslim women were enjoined to cover their faces with their sheets if and when they had to go out of their houses (v. 59).

On the occasion of the second attack, this Sūrah was sent down to keep pure and strengthen the moral fibre of the Muslim society, which had been shaken by the enormity of the slander. We give below a summary of the Commandments and instructions in their chronological order so that one may understand how the Qur'ān makes use of the psychological occasion to reform the Community by the adoption of legal, moral and social measures.

1. Fornication which had already been declared to be a social crime (4:15,16) was now made a criminal offence and was to be punished with a hundred lashes.
2. It was enjoined to boycott the adulterous men and women and the Muslims were forbidden to have any marriage relations with them.
3. The one, who accused the other of adultery but failed to produce four witnesses, was to be punished with eighty lashes.
4. The Law of Lian was prescribed to decide the charge of adultery against his own wife by a husband.
5. The Muslims were enjoined to learn a lesson from the incident of the "Slander" about Ā'isha, as if to say, "You should be very cautious in regard to charges of adultery against the people of good reputation, and should not spread these; nay, you should refute and suppress them immediately." In this connection, a general principle was enunciated that the proper spouse for a pure man is a pure woman, for he cannot pull on with a wicked woman for long, and the same is the case with a pure woman, as if to say, "When you knew that the Prophet was a pure man, nay, the purest of all human beings, how could you believe that he had experienced happiness with a wicked woman and exalted her as the most beloved of his wives? For it was obvious that an adulterous woman could not have been able to deceive, with her affected behavior, a pure man like the Prophet. You ought also to have considered the fact that the accuser was a mean person while the accused was a pure woman. This should have been enough to convince you that the accusation was not worth your consideration; nay, it was not even conceivable.
6. Those who spread news and evil rumors and propagate wickedness in the Muslim Community, deserve punishment and not encouragement.
7. A general principle was laid down that relations in the Muslim Community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion: everyone should be treated as innocent unless he is proved to be guilty and vice versa.
8. The people were forbidden to enter the houses of others unceremoniously and were instructed to take permission for this.

9. Both men and women were instructed to lower their gaze and forbidden to cast glances or make eyes at each other.
10. Women were enjoined to cover their heads and breasts even inside their houses.
11. Women were forbidden to appear with make-up before other men except their servants or such relatives with whom their marriage is prohibited.
12. They were enjoined to hide their make-ups when they went out of their houses, and even forbidden to put on jingling ornaments, while they moved out of their houses.
13. Marriage was encouraged and enjoined even for slaves and slave girls, for unmarried people help spread indecency.
14. The institution of slavery was discouraged and the owners and other people were enjoined to give financial help to the slaves to earn their freedom under the law of Mukatabāt.
15. Prostitution by slave girls was forbidden in the first instance, for prostitution in Arabia was confined to this class alone. This in fact implied the legal prohibition of prostitution.
16. Sanctity of privacy in home life was enjoined even for servants and under age children including one's own. They were enjoined not to enter the private rooms of any man or woman without permission; especially in the morning, at noon and at night.
17. Old women were given the concession that they could set aside their head covers within their houses but should refrain from display of adornments. Even they were told that it was better for them to keep themselves covered with head wrappers.
18. The blind, lame, crippled and sick persons were allowed to take any article of food from the houses of other people without permission, for it was not to be treated like theft and cheating, which are cognizable offenses.
19. On the other hand, the Muslims were encouraged to develop mutual relationships by taking their meals together, and the nearest relatives and intimate friends were allowed to take their meals in each other's house without any formal invitation. This was to produce mutual affection and sincere relationships between them to counteract any future mischief. Side by side with these instructions, clear signs of the Believers and the hypocrites were stated to enable every Muslim to discriminate between the two. At the same time the Community was bound together by adopting disciplinary measures in order to make it stronger and firmer than it was at the time so as to discourage the enemies from creating mischief in it.

Above all, the most conspicuous thing about this discourse is that it is free from the bitterness which inevitably follows such shameful and absurd attacks. Instead of showing any wrath at this provocation, the discourse prescribes some laws and regulations and enjoins reformatory commandments and issues wise instructions that were required at the time for the education and training of the Community. Incidentally, this teaches us how to deal with such provocative mischiefs coolly, wisely and generously. At the same time, it is a clear proof that this is not the word of Prophet Muhammad but of a Being Who is observing all human conditions and affairs from the highest level, and guiding mankind without any personal prejudices, feelings and leanings. Had this been the word of the Prophet; there would have been at least some tinge of natural bitterness in spite of his great generosity and forbearance, for it is but human that a noble man naturally becomes enraged when his own honour is attacked in this mean manner.

Sūrah 24: an-Nūr⁹⁰²

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. [This is] a sūrah which We have sent down and made [that within it] obligatory and revealed therein verses of clear evidence that you might remember.
2. The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse⁹⁰³ - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes,⁹⁰⁴ and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion [i.e., Law] of God,⁹⁰⁵ if you should believe in God and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.
3. The fornicator does not marry except a [female] fornicator or polytheist, and none marries her except a fornicator⁹⁰⁶ or a polytheist, and that [i.e., marriage to such persons] has been made unlawful to the believers.
4. And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with eighty lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient,
5. Except for those who repent thereafter and reform, for indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
6. And those who accuse their wives [of adultery] and have no witnesses except themselves - then the witness of one of them⁹⁰⁷ [shall be] four testimonies [swearing] by God that indeed, he is of the truthful.
7. And the fifth [oath will be] that the curse of God be upon him if he should be among the liars.
8. But it will prevent punishment from her if she gives four testimonies [swearing] by God that indeed, he is of the liars.
9. And the fifth [oath will be] that the wrath of God be upon her if he was of the truthful.
10. And if not for the favor of God upon you and His mercy...⁹⁰⁸ and because God is Accepting of repentance and Wise.
11. Indeed, those who came with falsehood⁹⁰⁹ are a group among you. Do not think it bad for you; rather it is good for you. For every person among them is what [punishment] he has earned from the sin, and he who took upon himself the greater portion thereof⁹¹⁰ - for him is a great punishment [i.e., Hellfire].

⁹⁰² *An-Nūr*: Light.

⁹⁰³ Either by voluntary confession by the offender or the testimony of four male witnesses to having actually seen the act take place. Otherwise, there can be no conviction.

⁹⁰⁴ The ruling in this verse is applicable to unmarried fornicators. Execution by stoning is confirmed in the *sunnah* for convicted adulterers.

⁹⁰⁵ i.e., Do not let sympathy for a guilty person move you to alter anything ordained by God, for His law is protection for society as a whole.

⁹⁰⁶ Included in this ruling is the adulterer as well. Such persons cannot be married to believers unless they have repented and reformed.

⁹⁰⁷ The husbands have been betrayed.

⁹⁰⁸ The phrase omitted is estimated to be "...you would surely have been punished, destroyed or scandalized," or "...you would have suffered many difficult situations."

⁹⁰⁹ Referring to the incident when the Prophet's wife 'Ā'isha was falsely accused by the hypocrites.

⁹¹⁰ i.e., 'Abdullah bin 'Ubayy, leader of the hypocrites.

12. Why, when you heard it, did not the believing men and believing women think good of themselves [i.e., one another] and say, "This is an obvious falsehood"?"
13. Why did they [who slandered] not produce for it four witnesses? And when they do not produce the witnesses, then it is they, in the sight of God, who are the liars.
14. And if it had not been for the favor of God upon you and His mercy in this world and the Hereafter, you would have been touched for that [lie] in which you were involved by a great punishment
15. When you received it with your tongues⁹¹¹ and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of God, tremendous.
16. And why, when you heard it, did you not say, "It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You, [O God]; this is a great slander"?"
17. God warns you against returning to the likes of this [conduct], ever, if you should be believers.
18. And God makes clear to you the verses [i.e., His rulings], and God is Knowing and Wise.
19. Indeed, those who like that immorality⁹¹² should be spread [or publicized] among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And God knows⁹¹³ and you do not know.
20. And if it had not been for the favor of God upon you and His mercy...⁹¹⁴and because God is Kind and Merciful.
21. O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing. And if not for the favor of God upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have been pure, ever, but God purifies whom He wills, and God is Hearing and Knowing.
22. And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of God, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving and Merciful.
23. Indeed, those who [falsely] accuse chaste, unaware and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter; and they will have a great punishment
24. On a Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.
25. That Day, God will pay them in full their true [i.e., deserved] recompense, and they will know that it is God who is the manifest Truth [i.e., perfect in justice].
26. Evil words are for evil men, and evil men are [subjected] to evil words. And

⁹¹¹ Rather than your ears, i.e., not thinking about what you had heard but hastening to repeat it carelessly.

⁹¹² Specifically, unlawful sexual relations.

⁹¹³ The hidden aspects of all things: what is beneficial and what is harmful.

⁹¹⁴ See footnote to verse 10.

- good words are for good men, and good men are [an object] of good words.⁹¹⁵ Those [good people] are declared innocent of what they [i.e., slanderers] say. For them is forgiveness and noble provision.
27. O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet⁹¹⁶ their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded [i.e., advised].
28. And if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter them until permission has been given you. And if it is said to you, "Go back,"⁹¹⁷ then go back; it is purer for you. And God is Knowing of what you do.
29. There is no blame upon you for entering houses not inhabited in which there is convenience⁹¹⁸ for you. And God knows what you reveal and what you conceal.
30. Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision⁹¹⁹ and guard their private parts.⁹²⁰ That is purer for them. Indeed, God is Acquainted with what they do.
31. And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision⁹²¹ and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment⁹²² except that which [necessarily] appears thereof⁹²³ and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment [i.e., beauty] except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess [i.e., slaves], or those male attendants having no physical desire,⁹²⁴ or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to God in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.
32. And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. If they should be poor, God will enrich them from His bounty, and God is all-Encompassing and Knowing.
33. But let them who find not [the means for] marriage abstain [from sexual relations] until God enriches them from His bounty. And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands pos-

⁹¹⁵ Another accepted interpretation is "Evil women are for evil men, and evil men are for evil women. And good women are for good men, and good men are for good women."

⁹¹⁶ By the words "*As-salamu 'alaykum*" ("Peace be upon you").

⁹¹⁷ Or a similar expression showing that the occupants are not prepared to receive visitors (which should be respected).

⁹¹⁸ Some benefit such as rest, shelter, commodities, one's personal belongings, etc.

⁹¹⁹ Looking only at what is lawful and averting their eyes from what is unlawful.

⁹²⁰ From being seen and from unlawful acts.

⁹²¹ Looking only at what is lawful and averting their eyes from what is unlawful.

⁹²² Both natural beauty, such as hair or body shape, and that with which a woman beautifies herself of clothing, jewelry, etc.

⁹²³ i.e., the outer garments or whatever might appear out of necessity, such as a part of the face or the hands.

⁹²⁴ Referring to an abnormal condition in which a man is devoid of sexual feeling.

- sess⁹²⁵ - then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of God which He has given you. And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life. And if someone should compel them, then indeed, God is [to them], after their compulsion, Forgiving and Merciful.
34. And We have certainly sent down to you distinct verses⁹²⁶ and examples from those who passed on before you and an admonition for those who fear God.
35. God is the Light⁹²⁷ of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light⁹²⁸ is like a niche within which is a lamp,⁹²⁹ the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills. And God presents examples for the people, and God is Knowing of all things.
36. [Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which God has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him with
- in them in the morning and the evenings⁹³⁰
37. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of God and performance of prayer and giving of zakāh. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about -
38. That God may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And God gives provision to whom He wills without account [i.e., limit].
39. But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds God before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and God is swift in account.
40. Or [they are] like darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darknesses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom God has not granted light - for him there is no light.
41. Do you not see that God is exalted by whomever is within the heavens and the earth and [by] the birds with wings spread [in flight]? Each [of them] has known his [means of] prayer and exalting [Him], and God is Knowing of what they do.
42. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and to God is the destination.

⁹²⁵ i.e., those slaves who desire to purchase their freedom from their owners for a price agreed upon by both.

⁹²⁶ i.e., rulings and ordinances, in particular those in this *Sūrah*.

⁹²⁷ i.e., the source and bestower of light and enlightenment.

⁹²⁸ His guidance in the heart of a believing servant.

⁹²⁹ Literally, "a burning wick," which is the essence of a lamp.

⁹³⁰ The term used here can refer to either afternoon or evening.

43. Do you not see that God drives clouds? Then He brings them together, then He makes them into a mass, and you see the rain emerge from within it. And He sends down from the sky, mountains [of clouds] within which is hail, and He strikes with it whom He wills and averts it from whom He wills. The flash of its lightening almost takes away the eyesight.
44. God alternates the night and the day. Indeed in that is a lesson for those who have vision.
45. God has created every [living] creature from water. And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. God creates what He wills. Indeed, God is over all things competent.
46. We have certainly sent down distinct verses. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.
47. But they [i.e., the hypocrites] say, “We have believed in God and in the Messenger, and we obey”; then a party of them turns away after that. And those are not believers.
48. And when they are called to [the words of] God and His Messenger to judge between them, at once a party of them turns aside [in refusal].
49. But if the right is theirs, they come to him in prompt obedience.
50. Is there disease in their hearts? Or have they doubted? Or do they fear that God will be unjust to them, or His Messenger? Rather, it is they who are the wrongdoers [i.e., the unjust].
51. The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to God and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, “We hear and we obey.” And those are the successful.
52. And whoever obeys God and His Messenger and fears God and is conscious of Him - it is those who are the attainers.
53. And they swear by God their strongest oaths that if you ordered them, they would go forth [in God’s cause]. Say, “Do not swear. [Such] obedience is known.⁹³¹ Indeed, God is Acquainted with that which you do.”
54. Say, “Obey God and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And there is not upon the Messenger except the [responsibility for] clear notification.”
55. God has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves⁹³² after that - then those are the defiantly disobedient.

⁹³¹ i.e., the hypocrites’ pretense of obedience is known to be a lie.

⁹³² i.e., denies the favour of God or does not live by His ordinance.

56. And establish prayer and give zakāh and obey the Messenger - that you may receive mercy.
57. Never think that the disbelievers are causing failure [to God] upon the earth. Their refuge will be the Fire - and how wretched the destination.
58. O you who have believed, let those whom your right hands possess and those who have not [yet] reached puberty among you ask permission of you [before entering] at three times: before the dawn prayer and when you put aside your clothing [for rest] at noon and after the night prayer. [These are] three times of privacy⁹³³ for you. There is no blame upon you nor upon them beyond these [periods], for they continually circulate among you - some of you, among others. Thus does God make clear to you the verses [i.e., His ordinances]; and God is Knowing and Wise.
59. And when the children among you reach puberty, let them ask permission [at all times] as those before them have done. Thus does God make clear to you His verses; and God is Knowing and Wise.
60. And women of post-menstrual age who have no desire for marriage - there is no blame upon them for putting aside their outer garments [but] not displaying adornment. But to modestly refrain [from that] is better for them. And God is Hearing and Knowing.
61. There is not upon the blind [any] constraint nor upon the lame [any] constraint nor upon the ill [any] constraint nor upon yourselves if you eat from your [own] houses or the houses of your fathers or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your fathers' brothers or the houses of your fathers' sisters or the houses of your mothers' brothers or the houses of your mothers' sisters or [from houses] whose keys you possess or [from the house] of your friend. There is no blame upon you whether you eat together or separately. But when you enter houses, give greetings of peace⁹³⁴ upon each other - a greeting from God, blessed and good. Thus does God make clear to you the verses [of ordinance] that you may understand.
62. The believers are only those who believe in God and His Messenger and, when they are [meeting] with him for a matter of common interest, do not depart until they have asked his permission. Indeed, those who ask your permission, [O Muhammad] - those are the ones who believe in God and His Messenger. So when they ask your permission for something of their affairs, then give permission to whom you will among them and ask forgiveness for them of God. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.
63. Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already God knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So let those beware who dissent from his [i.e., the Prophet's] order,⁹³⁵ lest fitnah⁹³⁶ strike them or a painful punishment.

⁹³³ Literally, "exposure" or "being uncovered."

⁹³⁴ Saying, "*As-salāmu 'alaykum*" ("Peace be upon you").

⁹³⁵ Meaning also his way or his *sunnah*.

⁹³⁶ Trials, affliction, dissension, strife, etc.

64. Unquestionably, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. Already He knows that upon which you [stand]⁹³⁷ and [knows] the Day⁹³⁸ when they will be returned to Him and He will inform them of what they have done. And God is Knowing of all things.

⁹³⁷ i.e., your position – the basis for your actions (whether sincere faith or hypocrisy) and the condition of your souls.

⁹³⁸ The meaning can also be rendered “...and [let them beware of] the Day...”