

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

(73) *“O Prophet! make war on the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh against them, their abode is Hell, and it is an evil destination.”* From here begins the third discourse of this surah, containing stern warnings to the hypocrites. This *ayah* also appears in surah *At-Tahrim*, which was revealed a year or two earlier than this surah. It has previously been mentioned that one of the main reasons for the Battle of *Tabuk* to take place was to expose the hypocrites because it was high time that the believers be clearly distinguished from the hypocrites. The Prophet’s mission had already been accomplished in the Arabian peninsula and now it had become obligatory on the Muslims to participate in such expeditions. This was the first time that all the Muslims of *Madinah* were ordered by the Prophet (SAW) to fight in the battle, while before that he would only persuade and exhort the Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah (SWT). This was a tough test for the Muslims as well as for the hypocrites, whose true identity had not been yet exposed. Amongst the Muslims, there were those who went ahead and joined the forces for *Jihad* without any hesitation but some of them were unable to join them because of some genuine excuse. On the other hand, there were the hypocrites who, despite the fact that they had no excuse to offer, did not participate in the *Jihad* because it was very hard on them. Indeed they were the people who lacked true faith. In the end they were unable to cover up their hypocrisy and thus were exposed publicly. As it has been mentioned before that in most of the *ayaat* that describe the conduct of the hypocrites, the word *Munafiqeen* (hypocrites) has been some how bracketed with the word *Momineen* (believers), because they profess to be one of the believers. But here Allah (SWT) has mentioned them along with the disbelievers, thus exposing the true nature of these hypocrites. In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) commands His Prophet (SAW) to fight against the disbelievers as well as these hypocrites whom He has already exposed, and he has been told to deal rigorously with them and not be lenient to them, for they have made a mockery of their religion and surely their final abode is Hell, which is an evil destination.

(74) *“They swear by Allah (SWT) that they said nothing, but really they said the word of unbelief, and they disbelieved after accepting Islam, and they tried which they could not achieve, and they*

avenged not except for this that Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) had enriched them of His Bounty. Then if they repent, it will be better for them, but if they turn away, Allah (SWT) will punish them with a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. And there is none for them on earth as a protector or a helper." Allah (SWT) states that whenever the Muslims came to know about the plots of these hypocrites, they quickly denied them and would declare an oath that they did not say anything. This refers to the sayings of the hypocrites especially Abdullah bin Ubai on the occasion of the battle of *Tabuk*. When the Muslims and the Prophet (SAW) came to know about what he had said, he swore by Allah (SWT) that he had not said anything. This will further be elaborated in detail when we read surah *Al-Munafiqun*. But Allah (SWT) states that what they had said is nothing but disbelief and surely they have returned to disbelief after accepting Islam. The sense of this *ayah* is that they had only embraced Islam from their tongues, but not with its actual spirituality i.e. with *Iman* (true faith). Thus, they just used the label of Islam as a cover to conceal the hypocrisy and disbelief within their hearts. Then Allah (SWT) said that they tried but could not achieve i.e. their plans to assassinate the Prophet (SAW). This incident occurred during the return of the Prophet (SAW) from the battle of *Tabuk*. Some of the hypocrites sat in ambush behind the mountain pass with the intention of taking the life of the Prophet (SAW), but Allah (SWT) saved him from them and thus their conspiracy was foiled. Then Allah (SWT) said about them that they had no excuse to carry out such evil plots except that He and His Messenger had made them rich by His bounties. This refers to the payment of *Zakah* to hypocrites and disbelievers in hope of making their hearts inclined towards Islam, which eventually made them very rich. The next part of the *ayah* gives a stern warning to these hypocrites and disbelievers as well as an opportunity to repent from their evil-ways, for if they do so it will be much better for them; otherwise they will suffer a painful punishment in this life and in the Hereafter and no one will be able to help them or protect them from this torment.

(75) *"And of them are some who made a covenant with Allah (SWT) (saying): "If He gives us from His Bounty, we shall give charity (and alms), and shall most certainly be among the righteous.""*

There were different kinds of hypocrites according to the level of their hypocrisy. Here and in the next two *ayaat*, Allah (SWT) describes one such kind

of hypocrites, which in my opinion also relates to the Muslims of Pakistan (Ayah 77). Allah (SWT) states that there are some who make a solemn pledge with Him that if He makes them rich and wealthy, they will certainly give charity and alms and spend money for His pleasure and live like righteous men.

(76) *“Then when He gave them of His Bounty, they became niggardly with it, and turned away, and they were averse.”* i.e. when Allah (SWT) gave these hypocrites out of His bounties and made them rich, they acted miserly with it and turned their faces away from their pledge.

(77) *“So He punished them and sowed hypocrisy into their hearts till the Day they meet Him, because they went back on that which they had promised with Allah (SWT) and because they used to lie.”* Allah (SWT) said that He punished those who turned away from the covenant that they had made with Him and they uttered nothing but lies. Thus He sowed the seeds of *Nifaq* (hypocrisy) into their hearts which will last till the *Day of Judgment*. These words should send waves of shiver through ones body, especially the Muslims of Pakistan, because in today’s definition of nations and countries, this is the only nation which gained independence in the name of Islam. We were oppressed and persecuted by the British regime before the partition and thus we prayed to Allah (SWT) and made a covenant to Him that if He delivers us from this oppression and persecution and gives us an independent state where we can practice our religion in freedom then we will surely make it a beacon of Islamic civilization and establish His *Deen* in it, which He had bestowed upon His Prophet (SAW). As a result Allah (SWT) gave us Pakistan, made us thrive in number and strength and gave us from His provisions and a safe place to live. But we unfortunately went back on our words. Instead of showing gratitude to Him and establishing His *Deen*, we went after worldly pursuits following our whims and desires. Thus, today we see hearts of most of them sowed with hypocrisy, lust and disunity and they have lost their values because of their distancing themselves from Allah’s religion i.e. the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW). May Allah (SWT) bestow upon us inner conviction in His *Deen* so that we can return to our covenant when there is still time.

(78) *“Did they not know that Allah (SWT) knows their hidden thoughts and their secret counsels, and that Allah (SWT) is the All-Knower of the unseen.”* The hypocrites lied when they pretended to fulfill the covenant even though they know that Allah (SWT) knows the secrets of their hearts and has full knowledge of their secret meetings, for He knows all that is hidden.

(79) *“Those who defame such of the believers who give charity voluntarily, and those who could not find anything to give but their hard earnings, they mock at them, Allah (SWT) will throw back their mockery on them, and they shall have a painful torment.”* This ayah describes another of the traits of the hypocrites who would try to defame and slander the believers in any way possible whether it is those who give charity and alms voluntarily or those who do not have anything to give. This refers to the collecting of alms and wealth before the expedition of Tabuk. If the believer was like Abu Bakr (RAA) would give all of his belongings for the sake of Allah (SWT), then these hypocrites would say that he is just showing off; while if the believer was poor and thus contributed a small amount, they would say ridiculing him that Allah (SWT) is not in need of your charity. For example, it was narrated by Ibn Abbas (RAA) that one day the Prophet (SAW) went out to the people and called them to bring forth their charity. Among the last of them came a man who brought only a Sa' (handful) of dates, saying: *“O Allah's Messenger (SAW)! This is the Sa' of dates. I spent the whole night bringing water and irrigating the garden of a Jew and earned two Sa' of dates for my work. I kept one Sa' and brought you the other Sa'”* The hypocrites scoffed at him that Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) are not in need of your Sa' of dates. But the Prophet (SAW) asked the person who brought the dates to spread them over the heap of the charity collected for they are much dearer to Allah (SWT) than that.¹ Allah (SWT) then answers the hypocrites that it is not they who scoff at the believers, but it is He Who will scoff at them i.e. He will punish them according to the act of evil they have committed, and theirs shall be a woeful punishment.

(80) *“Whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them. Even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah (SWT) will not forgive them, because they have disbelieved in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). And Allah (SWT) does not guide those people*

who are rebellious." In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) prohibited the Prophet (SAW) of asking for forgiveness for the hypocrites. Allah (SWT) states that O prophet (SAW) whether you ask for forgiveness or do not ask for forgiveness of the hypocrites, He is not going to forgive them because though they pretend to be Muslims, in reality they have disbelieved in Him and His Messenger (SAW). And Allah (SWT) does not guide such transgressors and evil-doers.

(81) *"Those who were left behind rejoiced in their staying behind the Messenger of Allah (SAW); they disliked to strive hard in the Cause of Allah (SWT) with their properties and their lives, and they said: "Do not go forth in the heat." Say: "The Fire of Hell is fiercer in heat", would that they understand!"* This refers to those hypocrites who stayed behind from the battle of *Tabuk* by giving lame excuses to the Prophet (SAW). They rejoiced in the thought that they had deceived the Prophet (SAW) with their lies and they are people who abhor to struggle hard with their riches and their lives for the sake of Allah (SWT). Not content with their lies and deception they also tried to hinder others from joining the expedition. They said to them not to go out with the Prophet (SAW) in that scorching heat and instead enjoy the shades in their homes. But Allah (SWT) answered them that the heat of the Fire of Hell is much more intense than that, but these hypocrites do not understand.

(82) *"So let them laugh a little and weep much as a recompense of what they have earned."* i.e. they should laugh a little for when they are returned to Allah (SWT) and see their end they will do nothing but shed tears, which will be a recompense for their own deeds.

(83) *"If Allah (SWT) brings you back to a party of them, and they ask your permission to go out, say: "Never shall you go out with me, nor shall you fight any enemy with me; you were pleased to sit back for the first time, so now sit back with those who stay behind.""* After the return of the Prophet (SAW) from the expedition of *Tabuk*, he was asked to tell the hypocrites that from now onwards Allah (SWT) has barred them from participating in *Jihad* and that if they ask his permission to join him for any future expedition, he should tell them plainly that they cannot join him. This is because when they were exhorted by the Prophet (SAW) to join the expedition of

Tabuk in the first time, they made excuses and preferred to stay back with their women. Thus, now they should also sit back with those who stay behind.

(84) *“And never pray for any of them who dies, nor stand at his grave. Certainly they disbelieved in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), and died while they were transgressors.”* In this ayah Allah (SWT) prohibited the Prophet (SAW) from offering funeral prayers for the hypocrites or to stand on their graves, because they are those who have rejected Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) and thus died as disbelievers and transgressors.

(85) *“And let not their wealth or their children dazzle you. Allah (SWT) intends to punish them with these things in this world, and that their souls shall depart while they are disbelievers.”* Allah (SWT) commands the Prophet (SAW) not to be impressed by the riches and the children of these hypocrites. Because of their love for this world, they spend all their energies and efforts for this worldly life, thus enjoying its riches and a high status in the society. But Allah (SWT) said that He will punish these hypocrites through these possessions in this world, for sometimes even one’s own wealth and children become the reason for worries and agonies in this life. This is so because Allah (SWT) wants them to indulge themselves in this worldly life, so much so that they die as a disbeliever.

(86) *“And when a surah is revealed, (asking the Muslims) to believe in Allah (SWT) and to strive hard along with His Messenger (SAW), the resourceful among them ask your permission and say, “Leave us, we would be with those who sit (behind).”* Whenever a surah was revealed asking the Muslims to believe in Allah (SWT) and strive hard and fight alongside His Messenger (SAW), the wealthy and affluent among the hypocrites would come to the Prophet (SAW) and beg him to leave them behind, so that they can stay in their homes with their families.

(87) *“They are pleased to be with those who remain behind. And a seal has been set upon their hearts, so they do not understand.”* i.e. these hypocrites love to stay back in their homes with their women, for whom it is not obligatory to go out with the Muslim army. Thus because of this behavior, Allah (SWT) has put a seal on their hearts, leaving them bereft, of understanding.

(88) *“But the Messenger and those who believe with him strove hard with their wealth and their lives. They are those for whom are the good things, and it is they who will prosper.”* On the contrary, Allah (SWT) described the qualities of those who followed His Messenger (SAW). They strove hard and fought for His cause with their wealth and their lives. The reward for such faithful believers is nothing but good things in the Hereafter and they are the ones who are successful and shall surely prosper.

(89) *“Allah (SWT) has prepared for them Gardens underneath which rivers flow, to stay therein forever. That is the supreme triumph.”* i.e. He has prepared for His faithful believers gardens i.e. paradise, with rivers flowing underneath it. They will stay there forever and such is indeed a great achievement and supreme triumph.

(90) *“And those who made excuses from amongst the desert Arabs came asking your permission to exempt them, and those who had lied to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) sat at home; a painful torment will seize those of them who disbelieve.”* This *ayah* refers to the hypocrites amongst the Bedouins. When the obligation of Jihad was publicly announced, they also came to the Prophet (SAW) and gave lame excuses to exempt them from going for the expedition of *Tabuk*, thus they lied to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) and stayed behind. Therefore, soon a punishment will seize those of them who disbelieved.

(91) *“There is no blame on the weak or the sick or those who cannot find anything to spend, if they are sincere to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). There is no way (blame) against the good-doers. And Allah (SWT) is Forgiving, Merciful.”* This *ayah* describes those who were exempted from joining the expedition of *Tabuk*. Allah (SWT) first mentions those who might have physical disability, which might be because of a disease or because of old age. Then He mentions those who cannot join *Jihad* because they are sick, for their illness may prevent them from fighting in the battle, and also those who do not have enough resources to spend for the preparation of *Jihad*. There is no sin on these people if they stay behind, as long as they are sincere and true to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) i.e. do not lie about their

condition, for such good-doers will not be blamed, and surely Allah (SWT) is Forgiving and Merciful.

(92) *“Nor on those who came to you that you might mount them, and you said: "I cannot find anything on which to mount you," they turned back, while their eyes overflowing with tears of grief that they could not find anything to spend.”* Likewise, there is no blame on those also who came to the Prophet (SAW) with a sincere will to join him for *Jihad*, but could not find any conveyance, because of lack of resources. Thus they turned back with their eyes full of tears over grief of not joining the Prophet (SAW) because they could not go forth into the battlefield on their own expense.

(93) *“The blame is only against those who beg for exemption, while they are rich. They preferred to be with those who sit behind and Allah (SWT) has set a seal on their hearts so they know not.”* i.e. the real blame is on those people who although are rich and resourceful and can prepare for the battle, but still opt to stay behind like their women. The fate of such is that Allah (SWT) sets up a seal on their hearts, so that they do not know or understand what they are losing.

(94) *“They will present excuses to you, when you return to them. Say "Present no excuses, we shall not believe you. Allah (SWT) has already informed us your news. Allah (SWT) will observe your deeds and so will His Messenger (SAW). Then you will be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the visible, then He will inform you of what you used to do.”* Allah (SWT) informed His Prophet (SAW) and the Muslims about the state of the hypocrites in advance. When they will return to *Madinah*, these hypocrites will present their excuses to them so as to please them and assure their sincerity for Islam. But Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims to tell them in clear terms that we are not going to believe in your baseless stories, for He had already informed us of your hypocrisy and as for the future, He certainly will see your deeds and so will His Messenger (SAW), in order to judge your sincerity. Then you will all be returned to Him Who knows the unseen and the visible, thus you will fully be informed of all your deeds.

(95) *“Soon they will swear by Allah (SWT) to you when you return to them, that you may ignore them. So ignore them. Surely, they are wicked, and their abode is Hell, a recompense for that*

which they used to earn." Allah (SWT) further informed the Muslims that when you return to *Madinah*, these hypocrites will swear to you by Allah (SWT) about their excuses being valid, so that you do not bring them to task and leave them alone. Thus, you should also ignore them, for they are a wicked and wretched people and their final abode is Hell, a punishment for their evil deeds.

(96) *"They swear to you that you may be pleased with them, but if you are pleased with them, certainly Allah (SWT) is not pleased with the people who are transgressors."* This is a warning for the Muslims that they should not become content and pleased with the lies and excuses of the hypocrites and thus not bring them to task for their evil deeds, for they should know that Allah (SWT) is not pleased with such transgressors.

(97) *"The Bedouins are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy, and more likely not to know the limits of that which Allah (SWT) has revealed to His Messenger (SAW). And Allah (SWT) is All-Knower, All-Wise."* In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) informs us about the Bedouins i.e. the desert Arabs, that these people surpass others when it comes to disbelief and hypocrisy. This is because these people remained ignorant of the teachings of Islam and the laws of what He has sent down, because they lived far away from the towns and were not able to spend much time with the Prophet (SAW) unlike his Companions (RAA), who had been blessed with his noble company and thus they had far more access to the meanings of the injunctions sent down by Allah (SWT) to His Prophet (SAW) and were more knowledgeable and pious as compared to the Bedouins. And certainly He knows who deserve to be given knowledge and He surely is Wise in His decisions.

(98) *"And of the Bedouins there are some who take what they have to spend as a fine and wait for a turn of fortune for you, on them shall be the evil turn of fortune. And Allah (SWT) is All-Hearer, All-Knower."* There were some amongst the desert Arabs who looked upon giving *Zakah* as a fine, for they did not have real faith and thus fulfilling the obligations was hard on them. They would wait for turn of events and that some misfortune befalls upon the Muslims, so that they be relieved from this penalty i.e. *Zakah*. But Allah (SWT) said that on them will be the evil turn of fortune i.e. ill-fortune befall them. And Allah (SWT) Hears and Knows everything.

(99) *“And of the Bedouins there are some who believe in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, and take what they spend as bringing them nearer to Allah (SWT), and prayers of His Messenger (SAW). Let it be known that these bring them near. Allah (SWT) will soon admit them to His Mercy. Verily, Allah (SWT) is Forgiving, Merciful.”* On the other hand, it is clear that all Bedouins are not alike and there are many sincere Muslims amongst them who devoutly believe in Allah (SWT) and in the Hereafter. Whatever they have to spend from their wealth and properties in the cause of Allah (SWT), they spend it willingly, for they look upon it as a means of getting nearer to Him and to receive the invocations and blessings of His Messenger (SAW). Then Allah (SWT) said that they should know that what they do i.e. spending in His way, is indeed a means of approach to Him. Thus He will admit them to His Mercy, for He is Forgiving and Merciful for His servants.

(100) *“And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun and the Ansar and also those who followed them in the best of intentions. Allah (SWT) is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens underneath which rivers flow, to live therein forever. That is the greatest success.”* This *ayah* mentions the two categories of the noble Companions (RAA) of the Prophet (SAW) classified according to the degrees of their excellence, for all people are not equal in their faith and commitment. Thus some excel over other due to their commitment and religiosity. This is just like what Allah (SWT) described the four grades of those who obey Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). He stated: *“Whosoever obeys Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SAW) will be in the company of those whom Allah (SWT) has blessed, of the Prophets, the truthful (Siddiqeen), the martyrs (Shuhada), and the righteous (Saliheen). What excellent companions are they!”*² Allah (SWT) has categorized true Muslims in these four grades or ranks and for each He has appointed stations of precedence. All Muslims can achieve such ranks of excellence according to their efforts except for the station of prophethood, which can never be acquired with effort and struggle, rather prophets were appointed by Allah (SWT) Himself. Similarly, in the present *ayah* Allah (SWT) has classified the noble Companions (RAA) of the Prophet (SAW) under two ranks in terms of their deeds and struggle. The *Qur’an* grades them according to precedence in belief and according to conversion before the Conquest of *Makkah* and after it. The first and the

foremost of them were the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar of Madinah*. This is the highest grade amongst the Companions (RAA) who were the first people to accept the call of Islam at a time when its followers were weak and were persecuted and tortured in all possible manner. Then the second rank amongst the Companions (RAA) is that of those who followed the first ones nobly. They were at a lesser degree as compared to the first ones, for the way had already been laid for them and they just followed the course. Nevertheless, Allah (SWT) said that He is pleased with them all and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them paradise with rivers flowing underneath it. They will live therein forever. This surely is the highest possible rank one can achieve. This is the supreme triumph.

Foot Notes

[1] At-Tabari 14:383.

[2] Surah An-Nisa(4): 69.