

The Meaning of

THE HOLY QUR'AN

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With intent that ye may
Eat up wrongfully and knowingly
A little of (other) people's
property;²⁰¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

SECTION 24

189. They ask thee

Concerning the New Moons;²⁰²
Say: They are but signs
To mark fixed periods of time
In (the affairs of) men,
And for Pilgrimage.
It is no virtue if ye enter
Your houses from the back:
It is virtue if ye fear Allah.
Enter houses
Through the proper doors:²⁰³
And fear Allah:
That ye may prosper.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَيَّامِ
قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِفُ لَيْلٍ وَنَهْيُ الْيَدِ
بِأَنَّ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا
وَلِكَلِّ الْأَيَّامِ
وَالْحُرُومِ وَاللَّحْمِ الْمَكْتُومِ
وَأَقِمُوا الصَّلَاةَ لِلَّهِ الْأَعْلَى
فَلْيُحْسَبُوا عَلَيْكُمْ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ

190. Fight in the cause of Allah

Those who fight you,²⁰⁴
But do not transgress limits;
For Allah loveth not transgressors

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

201. Besides the three primal physical needs of man, which are apt to make him greedy, there is a fourth greed in society, the greed of wealth and property. The purpose of fasts is not completed until this fourth greed is also restrained. Ordinarily honest men are content if they refrain from robbery, theft, or embezzlement. Two more subtle forms of the greed are mentioned here. One is where one uses one's own property for corrupting others—judges or those in authority—so as to obtain some material gain even under the cover and protection of the law. The words translated "other people's property" may also mean "public property". A still more subtle form is where we use our own property or property under our own control—"among yourselves" in the text—for vain or frivolous uses. Under the Islamic standard this is also greed. Property carries with it its own responsibilities. If we fail to understand or fulfil them, we have not learnt the full lesson of self-denial by *fasta*.

202. There were many superstitious connected with the New Moon, as there are to the present day. We are told to disregard such superstitions. As a measure of time, where the lunar calendar is used, the New Moon is one great sign, for which people watch with eagerness. Muslim festivals, including the Pilgrimage are fixed by the appearance of the New Moon. The Arabs, among other superstitions, had one which made them enter their houses by the back door during or after the Pilgrimage. This is disapproved, for there is no virtue in any such artificial restrictions. All virtue proceeds from the love and fear of Allah.

203. This is a Muslim proverb now, and much might be written about its manifold meanings. A few may be noted here. (1) If you enter a society, respect its manners and customs. (2) If you want to achieve an object honourably, go about it openly and not "by a backdoor." (3) Do not beat about the bush. (4) If you wish success in an undertaking, provide all the necessary instruments for it (Cf. 5:33).

The subject of the New Moon provides a good transition between the Ramadan fast, which begins and ends with the New Moon, the Pilgrimage, whose ten days commence with the New Moon, and the War which Islam had to wage in self-defence against the Pagans, who wanted to exclude them from the Pilgrimage after they had driven them out of house and home.

204. War is permissible in self-defence, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour (but not relentlessly), but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah. In any case strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees and crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms. (R).

191. And slay them
Wherever ye catch them,
And turn them out
From where they have
Turned you out;

For tumult and oppression
Are worse than slaughter;
But fight them not²⁰⁵
At the Sacred Mosque,
Unless they (first)
Fight you there:
But if they fight you,
Slay them.
Such is the reward
Of those who suppress faith.²⁰⁶

وَأَقْتُلُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
أَيْنَ مَا وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ
وَمِنْ أَيْنَ نَجَّوْا مِنْكُمْ

192. But if they cease,
Allah is Oft-forgiving,
Most Merciful.

وَإِن كَانُوا عَصَوْا
فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُمْ
عَصَوْا اللَّهَ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُمْ
عَصَوْا اللَّهَ

193. And fight them on
Until there is no more
Tumult or oppression,
And there prevail
Justice and faith in Allah;²⁰⁷

وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ
وَيُقْبَلْ مِنْكُمْ

205. This passage is illustrated by the events that happened at Hudaibiyyah in the sixth year of the Hijrah, though it is not clear that it was revealed on that occasion. The Muslims were by this time a strong and influential community. Many of them were called from Makkah, where the Pagans had established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the Pilgrimage during the universally-recognised period of truce. This was intolerance, oppression, and autocracy to the last degree, and the mercifulness of the Muslims to enforce their rights as Arab citizens resulted without bloodshed in an agreement which the Muslims faithfully observed. The Pagans, however, had no scruples in breaking faith, and it is unnecessary here to go into subsequent events. (Cf. 5:3).

In general, it may be said that Islam is the religion of peace, good will, mutual understanding, and good faith. But it will not acquiesce in wrongdoing, and its men will hold their lives cheap in defence of honour, justice, and the religion which they hold sacred. Their ideal is that of heroic virtue combined with unselfish gentleness and tenderness, such as is exemplified in the life of the Prophet. They believe in courage, obedience, discipline, duty, and a constant striving by all the means in their power, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, for the establishment of truth and righteousness. They know that war is an evil, but they will not flinch from it if their honour demands it and a righteous *Imam* (such as Muhammad was *par excellence*) commands it, for then they know they are not serving carnal ends. In other cases, war has nothing to do with their faith, except that it will always be regulated by its humane precepts. (R).

206. Suppress faith: in the narrowest as well as the larger sense. If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fall in, rooting out the tyranny.

207. Justice and faith. The Arabic word is *Dir*, which is comprehensive. It implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites, etc. The clause means: "until there is *Dir* for Allah."

For he is to you
An avowed enemy.

209. If ye backslide

After the clear (Signs)
Have come to you,
Then know that Allah
Is Exalted in Power, Wise.²⁰⁹

210. Will they wait

Until Allah comes to them
In canopies of clouds,
With angels (in His train)
And the question
Is (thus) settled?
But to Allah
Do all questions
Go back (for decision).²¹¹

SECTION 26

211.

Ask the Children of Israel²¹²
How many Clear (Signs)
We have sent them.
But if anyone,
After Allah's favour
Has come to him,
Substitutes (something else),
Allah is strict in punishment.²¹³

212.

The life of this world
Is alluring to those
Who reject faith,
And they scoff at those
Who believe.

210. If you backslide after the conviction has been brought home to you, you may cause some inconvenience to the Cause, or to those who counted upon you, but do not be so arrogant as to suppose that you will defeat Allah's Power and Wisdom. The loss will be your own.

211. If faith is waning, all sorts of excuses are made to resist the appeal of Allah. They might and do say: "Oh yes we shall believe if Allah appears to us with His angels in His glory!" In other words they want to settle the question their way, and not in Allah's way. That will not do. The decision in all questions belongs to Allah. If we are true to Him, we wait for His times and seasons, and do not expect Him to wait on our. (Cf. 6:7-8 and II:123).

212. The Israelites under Moses were shown Allah's glory and many clear Signs and yet they went after their own ways, and preferred their own whims and fancies. So do people in all ages. But let them not deceive themselves. Allah's justice is sure, and when it comes, it will be strict and unmistakable to those who reject His grace.

213 Cf. 2:196 (end) where the question was of those who do not fear Allah. Here the question is of those who reject Allah's Signs.

But the righteous
Will be above them
On the Day of Resurrection;
For Allah bestows His
abundance
Without measure
On whom He will.²¹⁴

213. Mankind was one single nation,
And Allah sent Messengers
With glad tidings and
warnings;
And with them He sent
The Book in truth,
To judge between people
In matters wherein
They differed;
But the People of the Book,
After the clear Signs
Came to them, did not differ
Among themselves,
Except through selfish
contumacy.

Allah by His Grace
Guided the Believers
To the Truth,
Concerning that
Wherein they differed.
For Allah guides
Whom He will
To a path
That is straight.

214. Or do ye think

That ye shall enter
The Garden (of Bliss)
Without such (trials)
As came to those
Who passed away
Before you?
They encountered
Suffering and adversity,
And were so shaken in spirit
That even the Messenger
And those of faith
Who were with him

214. Allah's gifts in this world seem unequal, and sometimes those who get them seem to deserve them least. Allah's bounty is unlimited to the just as well as the unjust. In His wisdom He may give to whomsoever He pleases. The account is not taken now, but will be taken in the end, when the balance will be redressed.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا قَوْمَهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِقَدْرِ حِسَابِهِ

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً قَبِلَتْ اللَّهُ
النَّبِيَّاتَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ
وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ
لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ
وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ

مَا جَاءَهُمْ مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ بَيِّنَاتٍ يَبْهَمُونَ
فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
لِئَلَّا يَخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِأَنَّهُ بَيِّنٌ
وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ لِمَا يَصْرُفُ سُخْرِيَتَيْهِ

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا
أَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ آيَاتُكُمْ
مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
مَسْتَمِمْ إِبْرَاطِسَاءَ وَالطَّرَافَةَ وَزُرُوكُوا
حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ

Liberality between yourselves.
For Allah sees well
All that ye do.

Guard strictly
Your (habit) of prayers,
Especially the Middle Prayer;²⁷¹
And stand before Allah
in a devout (frame of mind).

If ye fear (an enemy),²⁷²
Pray on foot, or riding,
As may be most convenient),
But when you are
in security, celebrate
Allah's praises in the manner
He has taught you,
Which ye knew not (before).

Those of you
Who die and leave widows
Should bequeath
For their widows
A year's maintenance
And residence;²⁷³
But if they leave
(The residence),
There is no blame on you
For what they do
With themselves,
Provided it is reasonable.
And Allah is Exalted in Power,
Wise.

241. For divorced women (a one
Time provision should be paid)
On a reasonable (scale).
This is a duty
On the righteous.

²⁷¹ The Middle Prayer: *Al Sabit al waqid*: may be translated "the best or most excellent prayer." Authorities differ as to the exact meaning of this phrase. The weight of authorities seems to be in favour of interpreting it as the *Asr* prayer (in the middle of the afternoon). This is apt to be most neglected, and yet this is the most necessary, to remind us of Allah in the midst of our worldly affairs. (R).

²⁷² Verses 248-249 are parenthetical, introducing the subject of prayer in danger. This is more fully explained in 4:101-103.

²⁷³ Opinions differ whether the provision (of a year's maintenance, with residence), for a widow, is to be paid by the share which the widow gets (one-eighth or one-fourth) as an heir (4:12). I do not think it is. The *qat'* (where made) takes effect as a charge on the property, but the widow can leave the house when she pleases, and presumably maintenance then ceases.

242. Thus doth Allah
Make clear His Signs
To you: in order that
Ye may understand.

كَذَلِكَ يبين الله
لكم آياته لعلكم تعقلون

C. 51. — Fighting in defence of Truth and Right
is not to be undertaken lightly or carelessly,
Nor to be evaded as a duty.

Life and Death are in the hands of Allah.
Not all can be chosen to fight
For Allah. It requires constancy,
Firmness, and faith. Given these,
Large armies can be routed
By those who battle for Allah.
As shown by the courage of David,
Whose prowess single-handedly
Disposed of the Philistines.
The mission of some of the messengers,
Like Jesus, was different —
Less wide in scope than that
Of Muhammad, and He carries it out
As He wills.

SECTION 32.

243. Hast thou not
Turn thy vision to those
Who abandoned their homes,
Though they were thousands
(In number), for fear of death?
Allah said to them: "Die!"
Then He restored them to
life.²⁷⁴
For Allah is full of bounty
To mankind, but
Most of them are ungrateful.

ألم تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا
مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ
فَقَالَ لَهُمْ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

244. Then fight in the cause
Of Allah, and know that Allah

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ

274. We now return to the subject of jihad, which we left at 2:214-216. We are to be under no illusion about it. If we are not prepared to fight for our faith, with our lives and all our resources, both our lives and our resources will be wiped out by our enemies. As to life, Allah gave it, and a coward is not likely to save it. It has happened again and again in history that men who tamely submitted to be driven from their homes although they were more numerous than their enemies, had the sentence of death pronounced on them for their cowardice, and they deserved it. But Allah gives further and further chances in His mercy. This is a lesson to every generation. The Commentators differ as to the exact episode referred to, but the wording is perfectly general, and so is the lesson to be learnt from it.

Hearth and knoweth all things. 275

245. Who is he
That will loan to Allah
A beautiful loan, 276 which Allah
Will double unto his credit
And multiply many times?
It is Allah that giveth (you)
Want or Plenty,
And to Him shall be
Your return.

246. Hast thou not
Turned thy vision to the Chiefs
Of the Children of Israel
After (the time of) Moses?
They said to a Prophet:
'That was) among them:
'Appoint for us a King, that we
May fight in the cause of Allah.'
He said: 'Is it not possible, 277

275. For Allah's cause we must fight, but never to satisfy our own selfish passions or greed, for the warning is repeated: "Allah heareth and knoweth all things"; all deeds, words, and motives are perfectly open before Him, however we might conceal them from men or even from ourselves. See 2:216, n. 236.

276. Spending in the cause of Allah is called metaphorically "a beautiful loan". It is excellent in many ways: (1) It shows a beautiful spirit of self-denial; (2) in other loans there may be a doubt as to the safety of your capital or any return thereon; here you give to the Lord of All, in Whose hands are the keys of want or plenty; giving, you may have manifold blessings, and withholding, you may even lose what you have. If we remember that our goal is Allah, can we turn away from His cause? (Cf. 64:17 and 3:180-181).

277. The next generation after Moses and Aaron was ruled by Joshua, who crossed the Jordan and settled the tribes in Palestine. His rule lasted for 25 years, after which there was a period of 220 years when the Israelites had a chequered history. They were not united among themselves, and suffered many reverses at the hands of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other tribes of Palestine. They frequently lapsed into idolatry and deserted the worship of the true God. From time to time a leader appeared among them who assumed dictatorial powers. Acting under a sort of theocratic commission from Allah, he pointed out their backwardness, reminded them under His banner, and restored, from time to time and place to place, the power of Israel. These dictators are called Judges in the English translation of the Old Testament. The last of their line was Samuel, who marks the transition towards the line of Kings on the one hand and of the later Prophets on the other. He may be dated approximately about the 11th century B.C.

278. This was Samuel. In his time Israel had suffered from much corruption within and many reverses without. The Philistines had made a great attack and defeated Israel with great slaughter. The Israelites, instead of relying on Faith and their own valour and cohesion, brought out their most sacred possession, the Ark of the Covenant, to help them in the fight. But the enemy captured it, carried it away, and retained it for seven months. The Israelites forgot that wickedness cannot screen itself behind a sacred relic. Nor can a sacred relic help the enemies of faith. The enemy found that the Ark brought nothing but misfortune for themselves, and were glad to abandon it. It apparently remained twenty years in the village (gavrah) of Kirjath-geserim. I. Samuel, 7:2. Meanwhile the people pressed Samuel to appoint them a king. They thought that setting would cure all their ills, whereas what was wanting was a spirit of union and discipline and a readiness on their part to fight in the cause of Allah.

279. Samuel knew as a Prophet that the people were fickle and only wanted to cover their own want of courage and true spirit by asking for a king. They replied with spirit in words, but when it came to action, they recoiled. They hid themselves in caves and rocks, or ran away, and even those who remained "followed him unwillingly". I. Samuel, 13:6-7.

سورة البقرة

سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يقرضُ الله قرضًا حسنًا

فَيضاعفُ منه أضعافَ كثيرة

والله يقرضُ من يشاء

والله شديدُ الحساب

ألم تر أن الله أرسل آل عمران ليقولن

لنبيهن أن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

If we were commanded
To fight, that ye
Will not fight?" They said:
"How could we refuse
To fight in the cause of Allah,
Seeing that we were turned out
Of our homes and our
families?"

But when they were commanded
To fight, they turned back,
Except a small band
Among them. But Allah
Has full knowledge of those
Who do wrong.

247. Their Prophet said to them:
"Allah hath appointed
Talut, 280 as king over you."
They said: "How can he
Exercise authority over us
When we are better fitted
Than he to exercise authority,
And he is not even gifted,
With wealth in abundance?"
He said: "Allah hath
Chosen him above you,
And hath gifted him
Abundantly with knowledge
And bodily prowess: Allah
Granteth His authority to whom
He pleaseth. Allah is
All-Embracing, and He knoweth
All things."

248. And (further) their Prophet
Said to them: "A Sign
Of his authority
Is that there shall come
To you the Ark of the
Covenant; 281

280. Talut is the Arabic name for Saul, who was tall and handsome, but belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. His worldly belongings were slender, and it was when he went out to search for some asses which had been lost from his father's house that he met Samuel and was anointed king by him. The people's fickleness appeared immediately after he was named. They raised all sorts of petty objections to him. The chief consideration in their minds was selfishness: each one wanted to be leader and king himself, instead of desiring sincerely the good of the people as a whole, as a leader should do.

281. Ark of the Covenant: Tabut: a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 5 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft. See Exod. 25:10-22. It was to contain the "testimony of Allah", or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat." This was a sacred possession to Israel. It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry; see n. 278 to 2:246. When it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years, and was apparently taken to the capital when Kingapp was instituted. It thus became a symbol of unity and authority. (R).

سورة البقرة

إن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

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وإن كنن معهن في سبيل الله

SECTION 7.

64. **فَمَا** that is the life of this world
But amusement and play!³⁴⁹⁷
But verily the Home
In the Hereafter—that is
Life indeed, if they but knew.

65. Now, if they embark
On a boat, they call
On Allah, making their devotion
Sincerely (and exclusively) to
Him!³⁴⁹⁸
But when He has delivered
Them safely to (dry) land,
Behold, they give a share
(Of their worship to others!)—

66. Disdaining ungratefully Our gifts,
And giving themselves up!³⁴⁹⁹
To (worldly) enjoyment! But soon
Will they know.

67. Do they not then see
That We have made
A Sanctuary secure, and that
Men are being snatched away
From all around them?³⁵⁰⁰
Then, do they believe in that
Which is vain, and reject
The Grace of Allah!

3497. Cf. 6:32. Amusement and play have no lasting significance except as preparing us for the serious work of life. So this life is but an interlude, a preparation for the real Life, which is in the Hereafter. The world's vanities are therefore to be taken for what they are worth; but they are not to be allowed to deflect our minds from the requirements of the inner life that really matters.

3498. Cf. 7:29, where I have slightly varied the English phrase according to the context. It was shown in the last verse that the life of this world is fleeting, and that the true life—that which matters—is the Life in the Hereafter. In contrast with this inner reality is now shown the straightforward folly of man. When he faces the physical dangers of the sea, which are but an incident in the phenomenal world, he actually and sincerely seeks the help of Allah; but when he is safely back on land, he forgets the Realities, plunges into the pleasures and vanities of fleeting phenomena, and his devotion, which should be given exclusively to Allah, is shared by idols and vanities of his own imagination. (R).

3499. Such folly results in the virtual rejection (even though it may not be express) of Allah and His Grace. It plunges man into the pleasures and vanities that merely delude and are bound to pass away. This delusion, however, will come to an end when the true Reality of the Hereafter will shine forth in all its splendour.

3500. If they want evidences of their folly in the phenomenal world itself, they will see sacred Sanctuaries where Allah's Truth abides safely in the midst of the Deluge of broken hopes, disappointed ambitions and unfulfilled plans in the world around. The immediate reference was to the Sanctuary of Makkah and the gradual progress of Islam in the districts surrounding the Quraysh in the midst of the trying Makkah period. But the general application holds good for all times and places.

68. And who does more wrong³⁵⁰¹
Than he who invents
A lie against Allah
Or rejects the Truth
When it reaches him?
Is there not a home
In Hell for those who
Reject Faith?

69. And those who strive³⁵⁰²
In Our (Cause)—We will
Certainly guide them
To Our Paths:³⁵⁰³
For verily Allah
Is with those
Who do right.

﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ
اَتَّخَذَ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَيْدًا
اَتَّكَدَّ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ
الْقِسْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ

﴿٦٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِيْنَا
لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا
وَلَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

3501. Cf. 6:21. Even from a worldly point of view those who reject Allah's Truth are at a disadvantage. But those who deliberately invent lies and set up false gods for worship—what punishment can we imagine for them except a permanent deprivation of Allah's grace, and a home in Hell! (R).

3502. Strive in Our Cause. All that man can do is to strive in Allah's Cause. As soon as he strives with might and main, with constancy and determination, the Light and Mercy of Allah come to meet him. They cure his defects and shortcomings. They provide him with the means by which he can raise himself above himself. They point out the Way, and all the Paths tending up to it. See next note.

3503. The Way of Allah (cf. *ḥiṣṣi al-Mustaqīm*) is a Straight Way. But men have strayed from it in all directions. And there are numerous Paths by which they can get back to the Right Way, the way in which the purity of their own nature, and the Will and Mercy of Allah, require them to walk. All these numerous Paths become open to them once they give their hearts in keeping to Allah and work in right Endeavour (*ḥiṣṣah*) with all their mind and soul and resources. Thus will they get out of the Spider's web of this frail world and attain to eternal Bliss in the fulfilment of their true Destiny.

PROHIBITION

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

66:1 **P**ROPHET, why do you prohibit that which Allah has made lawful to you, in seeking to please your wives?¹ Allah is forgiving and merciful.

Allah has given you absolution from such oaths. Allah is your master. He is the Wise One, the All-knowing.

When the Prophet confided a secret to one of his wives, and when she disclosed it and Allah informed him of this, he made known to her one part of it and said nothing about the other. And when he had acquainted her with it she said: 'Who told you this?' He replied: 'The Wise One, the All-knowing, told me.'

66:4 If you two² turn to Allah in repentance (for your hearts have sinned) you shall be pardoned; but if you conspire against him, know that Allah is his protector, and Gabriel, and the righteous among the faithful. The angels too are his helpers.

It may well be that, if he divorce you, his Lord will give him in your place better wives than yourselves, submissive to Allah and full of faith, devout, penitent, obedient, and given to fasting; both widows and virgins.

Believers, guard yourselves and guard your kindred against the Fire which has fuel of men and stones, whose keepers are fierce and mighty angels who never disobey Allah's command and promptly do His bidding. They will say to the unbelievers: 'Make no excuses for yourselves this day. You shall be rewarded according to your deeds.'

66:8 Believers, turn to Allah in true repentance. Your Lord may forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens

1. Mohammed, we are told, was once found by his wife Hafsa with a Coptic slave from whom he had promised her to separate. Of this Hafsa secretly informed A'isha, another wife of his. To free Mohammed from his promise to Hafsa was the object of this chapter. Some of the references are obscure.

2. Hafsa and A'isha.

PROHIBITION

watered by running streams, on a day when the Prophet and those who believe with him will suffer no disgrace at the hands of Allah. Their light will shine in front of them and on their right, and they will say: 'Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us. You have power over all things.'

Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal sternly with them. Hell shall be their home, evil their fate.

Allah has set an example to the unbelievers in the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were married to two of Our righteous servants and deceived them. Their husbands could not protect them from Allah. The angels said to them: 'Enter the Fire, together with those that shall enter it.'

But to the faithful Allah has set an example in Pharaoh's wife, who said: 'Lord, build me a house with You in Paradise and deliver me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds. Deliver me from a wicked nation.'

And in Mary, Imran's daughter, who preserved her chastity and into whose womb We breathed of Our spirit; who put her trust in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was truly devout.

