

DAY 1

ANSWER: ‘Aqabah

SURAH AT-TAWBAH: VERSES 111-112

Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against (a promise) that Paradise shall be for them. They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed - a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'ān. And who can fulfil his covenant more than Allah? So, rejoice in the deal you have made, and that is the great achievement. [111]

(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah. And give the good news to the believers. [112]

COMMENTARY

The background of revelation

As explained by the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed about the participants of Bai'atul-'Aqabah (the pledge of allegiance to the Holy Prophet ﷺ at al-'Aqabah) which was taken from the Anṣār of Madīnah before Hijrah in Makkah al- Mukarramah. Therefore, despite that the entire Sūrah is Madanī, these verses have been termed as Makkī.

'Al-'Aqabah' is part of a mountain. Here, it refers to the 'Aqabah that forms a part of the mountain along the Jamratu al-'Aqabah (the stone pillar of 'Aqabah) in Minā. (In our time, due to the increased number of Ḥujjāj [Ḥajj pilgrims], this part of the mountain has been levelled to form a smooth surface with the only exception of Jamarah [the stone pillar] which still stands there). It is on this 'Aqabah that a pledge of allegiance (bai'ah) was taken from the people of Madīnah thrice. The first pledge came in the eleventh year of the Prophet's ﷺ advent. Six persons embraced Islām, gave the pledge and returned to Madīnah. When they arrived there, Islām and the Prophet of Islām ﷺ became the talk of the town. Next year, it was during the Ḥajj season that twelve people assembled at the same place. Out of these, five had taken part in the first pledge while the other seven were new. All of them took the pledge. By that time, the number of Muslims in Madīnah had increased to more than forty. They requested that someone should be sent to teach Qur'ān to them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umair radī'allāhu 'anhu. He taught Qur'ān to Muslims present there as well as conveyed the message of Islām around, as a result of which major groups of people in Madīnah entered the fold of Islām.

After that, in the thirteenth year of the Prophet's ﷺ advent seventy men and women assembled at the same place. This is the third Bai'atu al-'Aqabah - and the last.

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Generally, when reference is made to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, it means this very Bai'ah (pledge of allegiance). This pledge made it binding on participants that they would uphold the basic beliefs (*'aqā'id*) and deeds (*a'māl*) of Islām, and would particularly be ready to take part in Jihād against the disbelievers, and protect and support the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he migrates and reaches Madīnah. In this connection, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah radī'allāhu 'anhū submitted, *'yā rasūlullāh, a compact is being made at this time. If there are any conditions regarding your Lord or regarding yourself, let these be mentioned there clearly.'* He said, *'As for Allah Ta'ālā, I lay down the condition that all of you shall worship Him - and worship none but Him. As for myself, the condition is that you shall protect me as you protect your own lives, wealth, property and children.'* They asked, *'if we fulfill these two conditions, what shall we get in return?'* He said, *'you will get Jannah.'* All in delight, they said, *'we are pleased with this deal, so pleased that we shall never request on our own that it be cancelled, nor shall we like it to be cancelled.'*

At this place, since the pledge took the apparent form of a transaction of give and take, this **verse (111)** was revealed in the terminology (**Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them**). After hearing this verse, Sayyidnā Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, Abū al-Haitham and As'ad radī'allāhu 'anhūm ajma'in, were the first ones who placed their hands on the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They were promising in effect that they were readily agreeable to this deal and they would protect the Holy Prophet ﷺ as they protected their family and would stand by him to face any challenge, even if it came from the combined forces of the blacks and whites on this Earth.

This is the very first verse of Jihād

Injunctions of Jihād did not exist during the early Makkan period. This is first verse about fighting and killing which was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah itself, though its implementation began after Hijrah. After that, came another verse: (**Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought against - al-Ḥajj 22:39**). When this Bai'atu al-'Aqabah (pledge of 'Aqabah) was concluded in secret from the disbelievers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered his noble Companions to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. Groups of them started migrating gradually. The Holy Prophet ﷺ remained behind waiting for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā. When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr radī'allāhu 'anhū decided to migrate, he held him back so that he could accompany him. (This whole event has been described in Tafsīr Mazharī with relevant references).

We can now move to the second sentence of the **verse (111): (They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed ... a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān)**. This verse tells us that fighting in the way of Allah was a commandment also revealed for past communities in their Scriptures. As for the popular assumption that there is no injunction of Jihād in the Injīl, it is possible that, as part of the changes made by people who came later, the injunctions of Jihād

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were expunged. Allah knows best.

At the end of the **verse (111)**, it was said: **(So, rejoice in the deal you have made)**. The agreement arrived at with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in this event of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah had, on the surface, turned into a sort of buying and selling deal. Therefore, it was expressed through the word: **(Allah has bought)** at the beginning of the verse. In the present sentence, Muslims were told that they had struck a good deal which will bring blessings for them. The reason was that they had tendered their life and wealth that were mortal while that which they received in return was eternal. If we come to think about it, we would realize that wealth was the only thing they spent out. As for life, that is, the essential spirit, that will remain even after death, and remain forever. And if we were to look deeper into the reality of wealth, that too happens to be nothing but the gift of Allah Almighty. When born, human beings visit the world empty-handed. It was He who made them own everything around them and it was He who made His own gift the price of eternal blessings and gave them Paradise. Therefore, Sayyidna 'Umar radī'allāhu said, *'this is a strange deal where the commodity and the price have both been given to you!'*

The last **verse (112)** which begins with the words: **“(They are) those who repent, those who worship...)** describes the attributes of the same believers about whom it was said earlier that Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them. Though, the verse was revealed as relating to a particular group of participants in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, but the sense of the verse covers all *mujāhidīn* in the way of Allah. As for the list of their attributes which opens with: **(those who repent)**, they are not there as a condition, because the promise of Paradise has been made for Jihād in the way of Allah, in an absolute sense. The purpose behind the delineation of these attributes is to stress that those who deserve Paradise do have such attributes - as was specially the case with the noble Companions who were a party to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah.

The word: **(as-sā'ihūn:** translated literally as 'those who journey'), according to the majority of commentators, means those who fast (*ṣā'imūn*). Actually, this word has been derived from: (*siyāḥah:* journey, pilgrimage). Before Islām, *siyāḥah* was taken to be an act of worship in the Christian religion that meant leaving home for the sake of worship. Islām declared it to be monasticism, and prohibited it. It was replaced with fasting as an act of worship. The reason is that *siyāḥah* taught disengagement from worldly life while fasting taught that one should abstain from worldly desires for a limited period of time living at home. It is on the same basis that Jihād too has been equated with *siyāḥah* in some reports. Ibn Mājah, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have authentically reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *(The siyāḥah of my ummah is Jihād in the way of Allah).*

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas radī'allāhu said that (*sā'ihūn:* those who journey) in the Qur'ān means:

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(*ṣā'imīn*: those who fast). Explaining (*as-sā'ihīn*: those who journey), 'Ikrimah said, '*they are students who leave their homes to seek religious knowledge.*' (Maḏharī)

At this place, seven attributes of believing *mujāhidīn* have been described as those who repent, those who worship, those who praise Allah, those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. After having enumerated these seven attributes, the eighth attribute was put as: **'those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah'**. Actually, this expression is an embodiment of all attributes mentioned earlier. In other words, the details given in those seven attributes have been eloquently reduced to one small sentence which means that they are committed to the limits set by Allah, that is, they obey, adhere to and protect the injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām.

At the end of the **verse (112)**, it was said: **(And give the good news to the believers)**. It means that the Prophet of Islām ﷺ should convey to believers who have the attributes mentioned above the good news of blessings nobody could ever imagine, nor could it be explained in words, nor has anyone heard about it from any source. The reference is to the ultimate blessings of Paradise.

COMMENTARY – TAFSĪR IBN KATHĪR

Allah has purchased the Souls and Wealth of the Mujahidin in Return for Paradise

Allah states that He has compensated His believing servants for their lives and wealth -- if they give them up in His cause -- with Paradise. This demonstrates Allah's favor, generosity and bounty, for He has accepted the good that He already owns and bestowed, as a price from His faithful servants. Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and Qatādah commented, "*By Allah! Allah has purchased them and raised their worth.*" Shimr bin `Atiyyah said, "*There is not a Muslim but has on his neck a sale that he must conduct with Allah; he either fulfills its terms or dies without doing that.*" He then recited this Ayah. This is why those who fight in the cause of Allah are said to have conducted the sale with Allah, meaning, accepted and fulfilled his covenant.

Allah's statement, **(They fight in Allah's cause, so they kill and are killed.)** indicates that whether they were killed or they kill the enemy, or both, then Paradise will be theirs.

The Two Sahihs recorded the Hadīth, (*Allah has made a promise to the person who goes out (to fight) in His cause; 'And nothing compels him to do so except Jihad = in My Cause and belief in My Messengers. ' He will either be admitted to Paradise if he dies, or compensated by Allah, either with a reward or booty if He returns him to the home which he departed from.*)

(It is a promise in truth which is binding on Him in the Tawrah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān.) affirms this promise and informs us that Allah has decreed this for His Most Honorable Self, and revealed

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it to His Messengers in His Glorious Books, the Tawrah that He sent down to Mūsā, the Injīl that He sent down to `Isā, and the Qur'ān that was sent down to Muḥammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be on them all.

Allah said next, **(And who is truer to his covenant than Allah)** affirming that He never breaks a promise. Allah said in similar statements, **(And who is truer in statement than Allah) (4:87)**, and, **(And whose words can be truer than those of Allah) (4:122)**.

Allah said next, **(Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded. That is the supreme success.)**, meaning, let those who fulfil the terms of this contract and uphold this covenant receive the good news of great success and everlasting delight.

(112. Those who repent, who worship (Him), who praise (Him), who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin good and forbid evil, and who observe the limits set by Allah. And give glad tidings to the believers.)

This is the description of the believers from whom Allah has purchased their souls and wealth, who have these beautiful and honorable qualities,

(who repent) from all sins and shun all evils,

(who worship), their Lord and preserve the acts of worship that include statements and actions. Praising Allah is among the best statements. This is why Allah said next, **(who praise (Him))**. Fasting is among the best actions, involving abstaining from the delights of food, drink and sexual intercourse, this is the meaning hereby, **(As-Sa'ihūn (who fast)) (9: 112)**. Allah also described the Prophet's wives that they are, **(Sā'ihāt) (66:5)**, meaning, they fast. As for prostrating and bowing down, they are acts of the prayer, **(who bow down, who prostrate themselves,)** These believers also benefit Allah's creation and direct them to His obedience by ordaining righteousness and forbidding evil. They have knowledge about what should be performed and what should be shunned. This includes abiding by Allah's limits in knowledge and action, meaning, what He allowed and what He prohibited. Therefore, they worship the True Lord and advise creation. This is why Allah said next, **(And give glad tidings to the believers.)** since faith includes all of this, and the supreme success is for those who have faith.

This concludes the commentary for Day 1.