

# DAY 10

**ANSWER:** Tabūk

## **SŪRAH AT-TAWBAH: VERSES 38-42**

**O those who believe, what is wrong with you that when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter. [38]**

**If you do not come out (in the way of Allah), He will punish you with a painful punishment and will bring in your place a nation other than you, and you can do Him no harm at all. And Allah is powerful over everything. [39]**

**If you do not help him, then, Allah has already helped him when the disbelievers expelled him, the second of the two, when they were in the cave, and he was saying to his companion, "Do not grieve. Allah is surely with us." So, Allah sent down His tranquillity on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see, and rendered the word of the disbelievers low. And the word of Allah is the highest. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [40]**

**Come out (in the way of Allah), light or heavy, and carry out jihād with your wealth and lives, in the way of Allah. That is good for you, if you were to realize. [41]**

**If there had been some gain near at hand and an average journey, they would have certainly followed you, but the difficult destination was too far for them. And they will swear by Allah: "If we could, we would have set out with you." They are ruining themselves. And Allah knows that they are liars. [42]**

## **COMMENTARY**

The verses quoted above describe an important battle from among those fought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As a corollary, also given there are many injunctions and instructions. This battle is known as the battle of Tabūk and is almost the last battle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Tabūk is the name of a place located close to the Syrian border towards the north of Madīnah. Syria was, at that time, a province of the government controlled by Byzantine Christians. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached Madīnah in the 8th year of Hijrah after the conquest of Makkah and the battle of Ḥunain, that was a time major parts of the Arabian Peninsula had come under the control of the Islamic state. This was a period of some peace Muslims could enjoy after their eight-year long battles against the Mushriks of Makkah.

## DAY 10

But, destiny has its own workings. Is it not that Allah had already revealed about the blessed person of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (so that He makes it prevail over every faith - 9:33, 48:28, 61:9) which was the glad tidings of a world of victories and the ascendancy of the Faith of Truth? The Prophet ﷺ and his companions in the mission would hardly have the respite to relax. Soon after they reached Madīnah, Syrian traders of olive oil informed them that the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql had assembled his forces at Tabūk on the border of Syria. They were also told that soldiers of the Byzantine army had been placated by the payment of advance salaries for one year and that they had sinister understanding with some Arab tribes and that they all had plans to mount a surprise attack on Madīnah.

When this information reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he decided that their attack plans should be pre-empted and they should be challenged where they are gathered together with their forces. (Tafsīr Maḏharī, with reference to Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Ṣāliḥī)

By chance, this was a terribly hot summer. People in Madīnah were generally devoted to agriculture. Their farms were close to being harvested. On this depended their economy, rather the sustenance of the whole year. Like people in vocations who have empty pockets by the end of the month, people who depend on agricultural produce are empty-handed close to the harvesting time. On the one hand, they have poverty while on the other, they have hopes of income in the near future. Then, there was this scorching heat of the summer for a people who had their first breather after eight years of incessant wars. No doubt, this was an exacting trial.

But, equally crucial was the time. This Jihād was different. It was not like the wars they had fought before. At that time, they were fighting common people like them. Here, they were to confront the trained armed forces of Hiraql, the ruler of Byzantine. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered all Muslims of Madīnah to come out for this Jihād. He also invited some other tribes living around Madīnah to join in.

This general call was a tough test for those who were willing to make sacrifices for Islām as well as a challenge to the hypocrites who would have to prove their claim to be Muslims by joining the Jihād or be exposed as false pretenders. Apart from this consideration, the inevitable consequence was that those who professed belief in Islām reacted to the call in terms of the conditions they were in. The Holy Qur'ān has enumerated them as separate groups of people and has pointed out to their condition as well.

The first group included those who were strong and perfect in their faith. They were ready for Jihād without any hesitation. The second group was composed of those who hesitated at the initial stage but, later on, joined up with those ready for Jihād. About these two groups of people, the Holy Qur'ān said: **(...who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked - 9:117)**. The third group was of those who were unable to join this Jihād on the basis of some

## DAY 10

genuine excuse. About that, by saying: **(There is no blame on the weak, nor on the sick - 9:91)**, the Holy Qur'ān has announced the acceptance of their excuse. Belonging to the fourth group were people who, despite that they had no excuse to offer, simply did not participate in the Jihād out of sheer laziness. Several verses were revealed about them, for example: **(And there are others who admitted their sins - 9:102)**, and: **(and there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah [comes]- 9:106)**, and: **(And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred - 9:118)**. These three verses were revealed about similar people. They carry admonition for their inertia as well as the good news that their Taubah or repentance has been accepted.

The fifth group was that of the hypocrites, the *munāfiqs*. Their hypocrisy was deep seated and saying yes to Jihād was hard. Finally, they failed to cover it up and stayed away from Jihād. Hypocrites have been mentioned in the verses of the Qur'ān on many places.

The sixth group included *munāfiqs* who had joined up with Muslims with the objective of spying and mischief making. The Holy Qur'ān mentions their conduct in the following verses:

1. **(and among you there are their listeners – 9:47);**
2. **(and if you ask them, they will say – 9:65);**
3. **(and had planned for what they could not achieve - 9:74)**

Given above were details about those who stayed away from the Jihād. But, the fact is that their total number was negligible. The majority did belong to those Muslims who, despite many prohibitive factors, chose to sacrifice all gains and comforts and were ready to face expected hardships in the way of Allah. This is the reason why the total number of the Islāmic army which set out for this Jihād was thirty thousand - a number never seen in a Jihād before.

The outcome of this Jihād expedition was that Hiraql, the Byzantine ruler - when he heard about such a large Muslim force coming up against him - was overtaken by awe. He simply did not turn up on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet ﷺ camped on the war front with the army of his angelic companions for a few days in the hope that the enemy may decide to come. When totally disappointed, he returned back to Madīnah.

The verses quoted above obviously relate to the fourth group of people who did not take part in the Jihād because of their inertia and without any valid excuse. In the beginning of this set of verses, they were admonished for their lethargy, then, they were told why they behaved the way they did and, finally, they were told how to correct themselves. This wise approach unfolds major lessons.

### **Regard for Dunyā and Disregard for Ākhirah: The Root of all Crimes**

No doubt, what has been said above is related to a particular event. But, if we were to think about it, we

## DAY 10

shall realize that the real cause of negligence towards faith - and of every crime and sin - is nothing but this love for the material and heedlessness towards the life to come. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *(the love for Dunyā [material life of the present world] is at the top of every error and sin)*. That is why it was said in the verse: **O those who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? - 38.**

This was the diagnosis of the disease. Its treatment appears next when it was said: **So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter - 38.**

The thrust of the argument is that one's major concern in life should be that of the eternal life in Ākhirah. It is this concern for the Ākhirah that offers the only and the most perfect treatment of all diseases. Incidentally, this also happens to be the master prescription for eradication of crimes that bother human societies all over the world.

The 'Aqā'id of Islam (articles of faith) are based on three principles: (1) Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah); (2) Risālah (the true mission of the messenger and prophet sent by Allah) and (3) Ākhirah (Hereafter). Out of these, the belief in Ākhirah is, in all reality, the moving spirit for correction of deeds and serves as an iron wall before crimes and sins. A little thought would make it amply clear that there can be no peace in the world without subscribing to this belief. The world as we see it today has reached its zenith in terms of its material progress. Then, there is no dearth of functional solutions and plans designed to eradicate crimes. Laws proliferate. So does the administrative machinery to interpret and implement the objective. No doubt, there is progress in those terms. But, along with it, everyone is witnessing crimes increasing day by day, everywhere, in all societies. The reason, in our humble view, is no other but that the disease has not been properly diagnosed and the line of treatment is not sound. The root of the disease is materialism, excessive indulgence in the temporal and negligence or avoidance of the thought of any life to come. The only way this frame of mind can be corrected is to remember Allah and think about the Ākhirah, the life to come. Whenever and wherever in this world this master prescription was used, whole nations and their societies became models of humanity at its best earning the admiration of angels. That this happened during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and during the age of his noble Companions, is sufficient as its proof.

It is interesting that the modern world would very much like to eradicate crimes but it would do so by not having to bother about God and the Hereafter. To achieve this purpose, it invents, introduces and surrounds itself with things to live with - a lifestyle which would never allow human beings to turn their attention towards God and Hereafter. The result of this negative approach is no mystery. We are watching it with our own eyes. Even in the face of ever better laws, all legal systems seem to be failing. Crimes are

## DAY 10

there as they were, in fact, they are increasing with dangerous speed. To conclude, we wish that intelligent people among countries and nations of the world would think of using this Qur'ānic prescription, at least for once, and discover for themselves how easily crimes can be controlled.

Now, as we move to the second **verse (39)**, the text has, after serving a notice of warning to the lazy and the listless about their disease and its treatment, delivered its verdict by saying: **'If you do not come out for Jihād, Allah will have you go through a painful punishment and bring in your place a nation other than you, and (by your refusal to follow Islām) you can bring no loss to Allah (or His Messenger) because Allah is powerful over everything.'**

In the third **verse (40)**, by citing the event of the Hijrah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it has been stressed that the Rasūl of Allah has no need to depend on any human help and support. Allah can help him directly through unseen factors - as it happened at the time of Hijrah when his own people had forced him to leave his homeland. On this journey, the only companion he had was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr raḍī'allāhu 'anhu, the true one. Enemy foot soldiers and riders were looking for them in hot pursuit. The place to hide he had found was no fortified fortress. It was just a cave and the enemy search party had reached close to its edges. Inside it, the companion of the cave, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr raḍī'allāhu 'anhu was worried, not for his own safety, but about his master. He was in fear lest the enemy outside were to harm the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, the master himself was sitting calm like a mountain at peace. Not simply that he was himself cool and collected, he was telling his companion, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr: **(*'lā taḥzan innallāha ma'anā: Do not grieve. Allah is with us*).**

What has been said here is composed of a couple of words, easy and effortless as they sound. But, let those listening place the blueprint of conditions prevailing before their eyes, cross their hearts and ask: Can someone dependent on mere material means be that tranquil? Every honest person would say that it was just not possible. The reason for this was no other but that which the Qur'ān has given in the next sentence: **So, Allah sent down His tranquillity on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see...**

These troops could be troops of angels, and of the elemental forces of the entire universe too - for they are, so to say, a virtual army of Allah. When this happened, the ultimate came to be. The word of disbelievers was rendered low and the word of Allah remained the highest.

In the fourth **verse (41)**, the command given earlier has been repeated for emphasis. It is being said here that, once the Prophet of Allah orders people to come out for Jihād, they must come out as a matter of absolute obligation - for on the compliance of this command hinges all that is good for them.

The fifth **verse (42)** mentions an excuse offered by those who did not participate in the Jihād because of

# DAY 10

negligence and lethargy. It was rejected as unacceptable because they did not use the ability given by Allah to pick and choose the right thing to do in His way. Therefore, the excuse of not having that ability is not valid.

This concludes the commentary for Day 10.