

# DAY 4

**ANSWER:** Masjid aḍ-Dirār

## **SŪRAH AT-TAWBAH: VERSE 107-110**

**And (there are) those who have built a mosque to cause mischief and infidelity and to create dissention among the believers and to make preparations for one who has been at war with Allah and His Messenger even before. And they will certainly swear (and say), "We intended nothing but good." And Allah testifies that they are liars. [107]**

**Do not ever stand there (in prayer). In fact, the mosque that was founded on *Taqwā* (piety) from the very first day is more-worthy that you stand there. In it there are people who like to observe purity; and Allah loves those observing purity. [108]**

**Is, then, a person who has founded his building on fear from Allah and His pleasure better or the one who has founded his building on the edge of an abyss about to collapse, so it did collapse with him into the fire of Jahannam? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people. [109]**

**The building they have made shall always remain a source of doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are cut into pieces, And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [110]**

## **COMMENTARY**

Anti-Islām activities of hypocrites have been described in several previous verses. The present verses mention yet another conspiracy hatched by them. It has been reported that there was a man in Madīnah. His name was Abū 'Āmir. He had become a Christian during the days of Jāhiliyyah and was known as Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib (that is, a monk). This is the same Abū 'Āmir whose son Hanẓalah raḍī'allāhu 'anhu is a well-known Ṣaḥābī whose dead body was washed by angels and which gave him the sobriquet of 'the one who was bathed by angels.' But, the father stuck by his error and remained a Christian.

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib visited him and criticized Islām. Even the answers given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not satisfy this unfortunate man. In fact, he said, '*may the liar between the two of us be cursed and die in travel far away from friends and relatives.*' He also said, '*I shall be there to help any aggressor against you.*' And so he did. He fought on the side of the enemies of Muslims in all battles right through the battle of Ḥunain. When the big and strong tribe of Hawāzin too was defeated, he lost hope. He ran away to Syria, the stronghold of Christians where he died far away from his friends and relatives. The prayer he had made was before him. When disgrace is destined for someone, this is how he acts. His own prayer brought that disgrace upon him.

But, as long as he lived, he remained busy hatching conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. He virtually tried to induce the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah and expel Muslims from there.

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One aspect of this conspiracy materialized when he wrote a letter to the hypocrites of Madīnah with whom he had a sinister understanding. He told them that he was working on the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah. But, it was necessary to have group strength to lend local support to the invader. For this purpose, he suggested that they should make a building right there in Madīnah giving people the impression that they were building a mosque so that Muslims do not get to be suspicious. After that, they should get their men together in this place and collect as much of weapons and supplies as they could. He wanted this to become an undercover center where his accomplices would be conducting their activities against Muslims by mutual consultation.

It was on his suggestion that twelve hypocrites got together in Qubā', a locality of Madīnah where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had first stayed during his *hijrah* and where he had built a *masjid*. They chose the same place to lay the foundation of another '*masjid*.' Ibn Ishāq and others have also reported the names of these hypocrites. Then, to keep Muslims under deception, the hypocrites made a plan that they would have the Holy Prophet ﷺ lead a *Ṣalāh* in congregation at their so-called *masjid* so that all Muslims are convinced that this new place was also a *masjid* very much like the one built there earlier.

A delegation from them came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They pleaded that the existing Masjid of Qubā' was far away. It was difficult for old and sick people to reach there. Moreover, they argued, the Masjid of Qubā' itself was not spacious enough to accommodate all residents of the locality. Therefore, they claimed, they had founded another *masjid* for that purpose so that older Muslims may benefit by it. Finally, (releasing their punch line) they said, '*please lead a Ṣalāh in this 'masjid' so that it stands blessed!*'

That was a time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was getting ready for the battle of Tabūk. He told them that he would be unable to do that as he was about to leave the city but he promised that he would pray there when he returned.

However, on his return from the battle of Tabūk, when he camped at a place close to Madīnah, the verses cited above were revealed to him which had exposed the conspiracy of these hypocrites. After the revelation of these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered some of his Companions, 'Āmir ibn Sakan, Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah and others, to go, demolish and burn the structure (of the ill-intentioned '*masjid*'). So these gentlemen took off, carried out the orders and the structure was levelled flat on the ground. (This event has been abridged from narratives reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maḏharī)

Quoting Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Ṣāliḥī, Tafsīr Maḏharī also reports that the site of Masjid Ḍirār was still lying vacant at the time the Holy Prophet ﷺ had reached and settled in Madīnah. When he allowed 'Āsim ibn 'Adiyy to build his house on that site, he submitted, '*yā rasūlullāh, I do not like to build a house on a*

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*cursed site about which these verses of the Qur'ān have been revealed. Nevertheless, Thābit ibn Aqram is really in need of a house for he has none. Please allow him to make a house here.'* So, going along with his suggestion, he gave this plot of land to Thābit ibn Aqram. But, as fate would have it, since the time Sayyidnā Thābit raḍī 'allāhu 'anhu came to live in the house he made there, he either had no child or if he did, the child did not live.

Historians have added that this place was cursed not only for human beings but also for domestic birds and animals that could not survive with their normal way of living. Thus, after that time, this place lies desolate at some distance from the well-known Masjid Qubā'.

After having gone through the details of the event, let us now turn to the text of the cited verses. It was said in the first **verse (107): (And [there are] those who have built a mosque) to bring harm upon Muslims.**

This verse points out to three motives behind the making of this 'masjid':

1. The first one is: (*ḍirāran*: to cause harm to Muslims). The words '*ḍirār*' and '*ḍarār*' are both used in the Arabic language to carry the sense of causing harm. As for difference between the two, it has been said that '*ḍarār*' is a harm that brings gain for the person harming but causes loss for the harmed. And '*ḍirār*' is the inflicting of a loss upon other people while it brings just no gain for the person inflicting it. Since, this was going to be the fate of this '*masjid*' - that its founders gain nothing out of it - therefore, the word '*ḍirār*' was used here.
2. The second motive reads: **(to cause dissention among the believers)**. It means that, by setting up this '*masjid*', they looked forward to creating a division among the community of Muslims. They hoped to wean out a group that would be offering Ṣalāh in their masjid as a sort of separate entity. Then, it may have also resulted in reducing the number of Muslims going for their prayers to the old Masjid Qubā'.
3. The third motive was spelt out as: i.e. to provide a sanctuary to enemies of Allah and His Messenger and a forum to conspire against Muslims.

This presentation as a whole proves that the '*masjid*' which was declared to be a 'harmful mosque' (Masjid Ḍirār) by the Holy Qur'ān, and which was demolished and burnt down under the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was no *masjid* in the real sense. Nor was it intended to be a place where people could pray. The three objectives behind it have been mentioned immediately above. From here we learn the rules that should be followed in our time. Today, may be some Muslims were to make a *masjid* close to and in competition of another Masjid, while their purpose is nothing but the same mutual discord, the same old effort to split up the congregation of the first *masjid*, or any other evil interest of this nature. If so, the maker of such a *masjid* will deserve no reward from Allah. Rather, he would be a sinner because of having created dissention between Muslims - but, despite all this, that place shall be called a *masjid* in

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terms of Islāmic law, and the etiquette and rules relating to mosques shall apply to it. Demolishing it or putting it on fire shall not be permissible. And the Ṣalāh of those who pray in it will also be valid - though, doing so shall continue to be a sin in itself.

From here we also learn about another rule relevant in contemporary setting. If a Muslim makes a *masjid* in that manner, either to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the maker will, though, not get the reward of making a *masjid*, instead, will incur a sin, yet it will not be what Masjid Ḍirār is in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, it will not be called by that name. When some people notice a *masjid* like that, they would say that it was Masjid Ḍirār. This is not correct. However, one could say that it was like Masjid Ḍirār. Therefore, its building can also be stayed - as done by Sayyidnā 'Umar raḍī 'allāhu 'anhu through a court order where he had instructed that another *masjid* should not be made close to the one already there lest the congregation and flourish of the first *masjid* is affected adversely. (Tafsīr Kashshaf)

About this Masjid Ḍirār, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been given the order: '**Do not ever stand there (in prayer) - 108.**' The word '*qiyām*' in the text denotes standing for prayer. The sense is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should never go in to offer his prayers in a mosque by that name.

### Ruling:

What it tells us is: If, even today, a new *masjid* is made adjacent to the one already there unnecessarily, just to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the better choice is not to offer prayers therein - though, Ṣalāh remains valid.

In the same **verse (108)**, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has also been told that it is correct for him to pray in the particular masjid the foundation of which has been laid on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) from day one. And then, the people who offer their Ṣalāh in it love to observe full precaution in remaining cleansed and pure (of all physical and spiritual impurities) - for Allah too likes such meticulous observers of self-purity. The context of the verse shows what is being referred to here is Masjid Qubā' where the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say his prayers at that time. There are some Ḥadīth narratives that also support this view. (As reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās, by 'Amr ibn Shaibah from Sahl al-Anṣārī and by Ibn Khuzaimah in his Ṣaḥīḥ from 'Uwaimir ibn Sā'idah - with reference to Maḏharī)

As for the reports which say that it refers to the Prophet's Mosque, they do not contradict it. The reason is that the foundation of the Mosque of the Prophet was laid in accordance with a revealed command by the Holy Prophet ﷺ with his blessed hands. It goes without saying that its foundation rests on *Taqwā*, that is, on purity, piety and fear of Allah. And who else could be more purified than the noble messenger of Allah? Therefore, that too is a masjid founded on *taqwā*. (As reported by Tirmidhī on sound authority)

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from Sayyidnā Abū Saʿīd al- Khudrī raḍīʾallahu ʿanhu, with the chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - from Qurṭubī)

At the end of the **verse (108)**, it was said: **(In it there are people who like to observe purity)**. In this verse, the masjid declared worthier for the prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the one the foundation of which was laid on Taqwa from day one. Thus, both Masjid Qubā' and the Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ are included in the sense of the verse. Also pointed to in this verse there is yet another merit of this *masjid* - that those who prayed in this *masjid* were a kind of people who did their best to remain cleansed and pure. The word for purity used in the text is *Ṭahārah*. The sense of *Ṭahārah* at this place includes purity from common filth and impurities, as well as purity from sins and bad morals. Those who offered their prayers in Masjid Qubā' and the Prophet's Mosque were generally equipped with all these virtues.

## Special Note

From here we also come to know that the merit or superiority of a *masjid* really depends on the fact that it should have been made with absolute sincerity for the sake of Allah. And to put it conversely, there should not be any trace of duplicity, any motive to earn name, fame and recognition, or any other false and corrupting interest involved in its making. Then, we also learn that the quality of those who pray in a masjid is significant. If they are good, righteous, knowledgeable about their religion ('Ālim) and are devoted to the worship of Allah ('Ābid), the superiority of the masjid increases. Offering prayers in a *masjid* frequented by such God-fearing people is more merit worthy.

In the third **(109)** and the fourth **(110) verses**, Masjid Ẹirār (the harmful mosque) made by the hypocrites has been condemned as it has to be when compared with a *masjid* that is blessed. This has been accomplished through the use of a similitude. The surface of the land on which they were laying the foundation of their '*masjid*' has been likened to a landmass that has been corroded on the inside by flowing water. The topsoil looks solid and smooth. Now, if someone starts building there, it is obvious that the whole thing would collapse instantly. Similarly, the foundation of this Masjid Ẹirār was inherently unstable. The result was that it collapsed and went right into the fire of Jahannam. The expression 'collapsed into the fire of Jahannam' could be figurative in its sense - in that it smoothed out the way of Jahannam for its makers. Some others have taken it in the real sense - in that the *masjid*, when made to collapse, went into the Jahannam. Allah knows best.

Then, in the last **verse (110)**, it was said that this building would always keep increasing the doubt and hypocrisy in their hearts unless their hearts are shredded into pieces. The sense is that their doubt, hypocrisy, envy and chagrin would go on increasing right to the end of their life.

This concludes the commentary for Day 4.