

Sura 60: Al-Mumtahina (The Woman Tested)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 13:

1. *Believers, do not take My enemies and yours as protecting guardians, offering them friendship, even though they disbelieve in the truth that has come to you, and have driven out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in God your Lord; if you have come out to strive in My way and to seek My good pleasure. Do you show them friendship secretly, when I know what you conceal and what you reveal? And whosoever does it among you he verily has strayed from the right path.*
2. *If they have the upper hand on you, they will be your foes, and will stretch out their hands and their tongues toward you with evil (intent), and they long for you to disbelieve.*
3. *Your ties of kindred and your children will avail you nothing; on the Day of Resurrection He will decide between you, and God is All-Seeing of what you do.*
4. *You have an excellent example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, "We disown you and whatever you worship besides God; we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, unless you believe in God alone." Save that which Abraham promised his father (when he said), "I will ask forgiveness for you, though I cannot protect you from God." They prayed, "Our Lord, we put our trust in You, and to You we turn repentant, and to You is our final destination.*
5. *Our Lord, do not make us a prey for the disbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord, for You are the Eminent, the Wise."*
6. *There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow, for those whose hope is in God and in the Last Day. But if any turns away, truly God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.*
7. *It may be that God will instill affection between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); And God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.*
8. *God does not forbid you, with regard to those who did not fight you because of your faith nor drove you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them. God loves those who are just.*
9. *God only forbids you, with regard to those who fought you because of your faith, drove you out of your homes, and supported (others) in driving you out from your homes, that you make them your friends. Whosoever befriends them, these are the wrongdoers.*
10. *Believers, when believing women come to you as emigrants, test them. God knows their faith best. Then, if you know them to be true believers, do not send them back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful for them (the disbelievers), nor are they (the disbelievers) lawful for them. And give them (the disbelievers) that which they have spent (upon them). And it is no sin for you to marry such women when you have given them their dues. And hold not to the ties of disbelieving women; and ask for (the return of) that which you have spent; and let them (the disbelievers) ask for that which they have spent. That is the judgment of God. He judges between you. God is Omniscient, Wise.*

11. *And if any of your wives deserts you to the disbelievers, and afterward you have your turn (of triumph), then give to those whose wives have deserted them the like of that which they have spent, and be conscious of God in whom you believe.*
12. *Prophet, when believing women come to you to take the oath of allegiance that they will not ascribe a partner to God, and will neither steal nor commit adultery nor kill their children, nor produce any lie that they have fabricated between their hands and feet, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their allegiance and ask God to forgive them; God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.*
13. *Believers, do not befriend people with whom God is angry; they despaired of the Hereafter, just as the disbelievers are in despair about those are (buried) in the graves. (60: 1 – 13)*

This Sura provides another lesson in the series of divine lessons which were used to teach the Muslim community in Medina the characters that Muslims should acquire. It is important for Muslims to have these characters if they were to show the world a live example of the Islamic way of life.

The Sura starts with the endearing address, “*Believers.*” God is calling upon the believers to educate them how to deal in an appropriate way with those who chose to be the enemies of God. God tells the believers that these people are His enemies as well as theirs. This way of addressing the believers makes them feel that God is on their side, “*Believers, do not take My enemies and yours as protecting guardians, offering them friendship.*” The basic reason that they have become God’s, as well as, their enemies is that they disbelieved in the truth that had come to the believers. In addition, they expelled the Messenger (PBUH) as well as the believers from their homes simply because they believed in the truth, “*even though they disbelieve in the truth that has come to you, and have driven out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in God your Lord;*” The reason for the enmity between you and them is that they rejected your faith, how can then the believers take the disbelievers as friends? If the believers really migrated to, “*strive in My way and to seek My good pleasure,*” then there is no place for the friendship between the believers and the disbelievers. The believer’s heart has no room for the love of both God and the disbelievers.

God then issued a warning for those who may entertain affection towards the disbelievers, “*Do you show them friendship secretly, when I know what you conceal and what you reveal?*” God knows what they reveal and what they conceal. Those who befriend the disbelievers are issued a dire warning, “*And whosoever does it among you he verily has strayed from the right path.*”

The reasons for this warning are then revealed, “*If they have the upper hand on you, they will be your foes, and will stretch out their hands and their tongues toward you with evil (intent), and they long for you to disbelieve.*” The disbelievers will never be true friends to the believers. They will always persecute and assault them if they can. They will always wish that the disbelievers revert back to disbelief. For the believers, relinquishing the faith of Islam is worse than any harm that can be inflicted upon them by their enemy.

The believers at that time still had family members and even children who did not believe. The Quran tells them that they will not be of benefit for them on the Day of Judgment, *“Your ties of kindred and your children will avail you nothing on the Day of Resurrection. He will decide between you; and God sees what you do.”* The believers and disbelievers will be in separate camps on the Day of Judgment. The kin relationships have been severed between the believers and the disbelievers. The believers were reminded that God sees everything.

The following verses remind the believers at all times with the beginning of this nation; the nation that believes in the Oneness of God. It is a single nation that extends over the history of humanity, a nation of believers that disown all relationships except the relationship of faith. It is the nation that emanated from the first patriarch, Prophet Abraham (PBUH). He gave the Muslim nation the true example not only in believing in the uniqueness and Oneness of God but also in the best behavior, *“You have an excellent example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘We disown you and whatever you worship besides God; we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever, unless you believe in God alone.’ Save that which Abraham promised his father (when he said), ‘I will ask forgiveness for you, though I cannot protect you from God.’ They prayed, ‘Our Lord, we put our trust in You, and to You we turn repentant, and to You is our final destination. Our Lord, do not make us a prey for the disbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord, for You are the Eminent, the Wise.’”* These verses remind the believers that they belong to a nation that has a long history. Many generations before them lived in similar circumstances; they, strived in the way of God as they are striving and suffered oppression as they are suffering. Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and those who followed him experienced similar circumstances to those which the migrants from Mecca were experiencing. What did they do? They said to their people, *“We disown you and whatever you worship besides God; we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever, unless you believe in God alone.”* They severed all ties except the ties that were established on the basis of the shared faith. Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was still hoping that his father would join the nation of the believers, so he promised to ask God to forgive him, however he made it clear that it is God’s decision, *“though I cannot protect you from God.”* The Quran explains in a different Sura that when Prophet Abraham (PBUH) became certain that his father will not believe he applied the same rule and he disowned his father, *“But when it became apparent to him (Abraham) that he (his father) was an enemy of God, he disowned him.”* (9:114)

The invocation of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and his followers, *“Our Lord, we put our trust in You, and to You we turn repentant, and to You is our final destination. Our Lord, do not make us a prey for the disbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord, for You are the Eminent, the Wise,”* reflect the absolute submission which is one of the major traits that Prophet Abraham (PBUH) had. The invocation carries a message to the believers to follow in Abraham’s (PBUH) footsteps and to submit to God.

The lesson that the believers should learn about emulating Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and his followers is reiterated, *“There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow, for those whose hope is in God and in the Last Day. But if any turns away truly God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.”* The lesson was also emphasized by reminding the believers that this is the path for those who have hope in God and the Last Day. God is Self-sufficient and

Independent. He does not need those who dissociate themselves from the caravan of the believers.

The following verse brings hope to the believers that their enemies may become believers and it establishes a basic principle that govern the relationships between the Muslim state and other non-Muslims states. Muslims should maintain amicable and peaceful relationships with non-aggressive states. As long as they are not being attacked by others, Muslims should treat others with kindness and justice, *“It may be that God will instill affection between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); and God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.”* Islam is a religion of peace and love. It is a system under which people can live as brothers and sisters. The verse goes beyond this. Muslims should treat their enemies fairly and kindly; who knows, maybe they will become believers? This promise was later realized when the tribe of Quraish became Muslims, *“God does not forbid you, with regard to those who did not fight you because of your faith nor drove you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them. God loves those who are just. God only forbids you, with regard to those who fought you because of your faith, drove you out of your homes, and supported (others) in driving you out from your homes, that you make them your friends. Whosoever befriends them, these are the wrongdoers.”*

“Believers, when believing women come to you as emigrants, test them. God knows their faith best. Then, if you know them to be true believers, do not send them back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful for them (the disbelievers), nor are they (the disbelievers) lawful for them. And give them (the disbelievers) that which they have spent (upon them). And it is no sin for you to marry such women when you have given them their dues. And hold not to the ties of disbelieving women; and ask for (the return of) that which you have spent; and let them (the disbelievers) ask for that which they have spent. That is the judgment of God. He judges between you. God is Omniscient, Wise. And if any of your wives deserts you to the disbelievers, and afterward you have your turn (of triumph), then give to those whose wives have deserted them the like of that which they have spent, and be conscious of God in Whom you believe.”

These two verses were revealed after the conclusion of the agreement of Hudaibiyah. Some Muslim women from Mecca came to the Prophet (PBUH) asking to join the Muslims in Medina. The chiefs of Quraish objected to this thinking that this contravenes the agreement. The verses came down to settle the dispute. The verses forbade the Muslims to deliver the Muslim women who wanted to migrate to Medina back to the disbelievers. The verses also established a process to determine who is eligible for this refugee status. The Muslims have to ascertain the basis for the claim of the refugee, *“Believers, when believing women come to you as emigrants, test them. God knows their faith best.”* The test would only examine the face value of the claim, but only God knows the truth of their claim. The rationale for not returning the women refugees to the disbelievers is explained, *“They are not lawful for them (the disbelievers), nor are they (the disbelievers) lawful for them.”* However, the disbelieving husbands should be treated equitably and should not be cheated out of what gifts they gave their wives, *“give them (the disbelievers) that which they have spent (upon them).”* These women were then considered divorcees and they

can remarry according to the Islamic rules, *“And it is no sin for you to marry such women when you have given them their dues.”* This is God’s rule. God knows best.

The verses also prohibited Muslim men to remain wedded to disbelieving women, *“And hold not to the ties of disbelieving women.”* If the disbelievers refused to pay back a Muslim husband the amount of money he paid as a wedding gift, then it is the duty of the Muslim government to compensate the husband for his loss.

The text for the pledge which these women would make was then given, *“Prophet, when believing women come to you to take the oath of allegiance that they will not ascribe a partner to God, and will neither steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor produce any lie that they have fabricated between their hands and feet, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their allegiance and ask God to forgive them; God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.”* The pledge embodied all the basic principles on which the Muslim society is established.

The Sura is then concluded by a command to the believers, *“Believers, do not befriend people with whom God is angry; they despaired of the Hereafter, just as the disbelievers are in despair about those (buried) in graves.”* The believers should not take as protective patrons those whom God considers enemies. These people have no hope in the Hereafter because they do not believe in the resurrection after death. Their hope in the Hereafter is similar to the hope of the disbelievers in the resurrection of their dead people.