

Sura 63: Al-Munafiqun (The Hypocrites)

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

Verses 1 to 11:

1. *When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God." God knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars.*
2. *They made their faith a pretext so that they may turn people from the way of God. Verily evil is that which they do.*
3. *That is because they believed, then they disbelieved, therefore their hearts are sealed so that they do not understand.*
4. *And when you look at them, their figures please you; and when they speak, you listen to their talk. They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on their own). They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemies; so beware of them. May God destroy them? How perverted are they?*
5. *And when it is said to them, "Come, the Messenger of God will pray for your forgiveness," they turn their heads aside and you see them turning away their faces in arrogance.*
6. *It is all the same whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; God will not forgive them. God does not guide the transgressors.*
7. *They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with God's Messenger that they may disperse. And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.*
8. *They say, "If we return to Medina, surely the more honorable will expel therefrom the contemptible ones." But honor belongs to God and His Messenger, and to the believers; but the hypocrites do not know.*
9. *Believers, let not your wealth nor your children distract you from the remembrance of God. Those who do so, they are the losers.*
10. *And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he would say, "My Lord, if only You delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous?"*
11. *But never will God delay a soul when its time has come; and God is well aware of what you do. (63: 1-11)*

The name of this Sura suggests its subject matter. This is not the only Sura that dealt with the problem of hypocrisy. The topic of hypocrisy and the problems caused by hypocrites appear in most of the Suras that were revealed in Medina. However, this Sura deals only with these topics. The Sura castigates the hypocrites and exposes their mean characters. It concludes by a command to the believers to relinquish any character that may be remotely related to hypocrisy. The phenomenon of hypocrisy appeared after the migration to Medina and continued in one form or another until the death of the Prophet (PBUH).

The Sura starts by exposing their deceptive attitude towards the believers. They disguised their animosity to Islam and Muslims under a pretense that they have adopted Islam, "*When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God." God knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars. They made their faith a pretext so that they may turn people from the way of God. Verily evil is that which they do.*" They used to come to the Messenger of God (PBUH)

pretending they have adopted Islam while deep in their hearts they harbored ill feelings towards Islam and Muslims. The verse is very accurate in its statement. First, it ascertains the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) is God's Messenger, *"God knows that you are indeed His Messenger."* Then it exposes their malice, *"God bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars."* They would take an oath to support their claim that they have become Muslims whenever they need to, but only to use it as a means to debar people from the straight path, *"They made their faith a pretext so that they may turn people from the way of God."* They did experience faith but recanted, *"That is because they believed, then they disbelieved, therefore their hearts are sealed so that they do not understand."* A person who tastes the sweetness of faith then recants is indeed a person whose heart has been sealed and indeed he has no understanding.

The verse then describes them in a sarcastic way. Their looks are pleasing to the eye but their inner selves hold nothing except cowardice and treachery. They are figures but not people. Just like a statue that cannot stand on its own and it has to be propped up, *"And when you look at them, their figures please you; and when they speak, you listen to their talk. They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on their own). They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemies; so beware of them. May God destroy them? How perverted are they?"* They were always weary of being exposed and apprehensive of any criticism. The Quran warned the Messenger (PBUH) against them, *"They are the enemies; so beware of them."* They were a fifth column who wanted to attack the Muslims from within. The verse, however, curses them rather than commanding the Messenger (PBUH) to fight them: *"May God destroy them."* This curse is a decree from God that is destined to happen.

"And when it is said to them, 'Come, the Messenger of God will pray for your forgiveness,' they turn their heads aside and you see them turning away their faces in arrogance. It is all the same whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; God will not forgive them. God does not guide the transgressors. They are the ones who say, 'Do not spend on those who are with God's Messenger that they may disperse. And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand. They say, 'If we return to Medina, surely the more honorable will expel therefrom the contemptible ones.' But honor belongs to God and His Messenger, and to the believers; but the hypocrites do not know." It has been narrated that these verses describe an event that occurred on the way back from the battle of Bani Al-Mustaliq. Two men, one from the tribe of Khazraj and the other from the tribe of Bani Ghifar, fought over who would drink first. The first person called upon the Ansar (people from Medina) to support him and the other called upon the Muhajereen (people from Mecca) to support him. Abd Allah ibn Saloul became angry when he saw that scene. He attacked the migrants in the presence of a group of his friends, lamented how they were crowding the people of Medina, and threatened to expel them from Medina when they return back, *"If we return to Medina, surely the more honorable will expel therefrom the contemptible ones."* A young man by the name of Zaid ibn Arqam (RA) was among those who listened to Ibn Saloul's talk. He went to the Messenger (PBUH) and told him what Ibn Saloul had said. Umar (RA) was present and suggested to the Prophet (PBUH) to send someone to kill Ibn Saloul but the Prophet (PBUH) declined to do that. The Messenger (PBUH) decided that the best course of action is to distract people from the conflict so he commanded the army to start moving. When Ibn Saloul realized that Zaid (RA) told the Messenger about what he said, he went to the Messenger (PBUH) and took an oath that he did not say that.

One of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) from Medina by the name of Osaid ibn Hudair (RA) asked the Prophet (PBUH) about the reason that the army was commanded to move on before they had their rest. The Prophet (PBUH) told him about what Ibn Saloul said and the potential for a fight between the people from Mecca and the people from Medina. Osaid (RA) said, *“Prophet of God, you will, God willing, expel him from Medina.”* Osaid (RA) then explained the reason for Ibn Saloul's anger. Just before the Prophet (PBUH) migrated to Medina, the people of Medina were about to appoint Ibn Saloul their king. When the people of Medina accepted Islam and the Prophet (PBUH) migrated to Medina, the plans for appointing Ibn Saloul a king fell through. That is why he held a grudge against the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) marched with the army to a place where they camped again. The men were so tired, they fell asleep right away. Thus, the potential fight was avoided.

The son of Abd Allah ibn Saloul heard about the conflict and his father's behavior. He stood at the gate of Medina with a sword in his hand. When his father showed up he stopped him and told him that he would not allow him to enter until he gets permission from the Messenger (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) rode at the rear of the army so when he reached the gate of Medina he gave Ibn Saloul the permission to enter Medina.

The Sura shows how the Prophet (PBUH) dealt with the hypocrites. Although the Prophet (PBUH) knew them by name, he did not expose them and tried hard to reform them. The Prophet (PBUH), just before he died, told only one companion, Hudhaifah ibn Al-Yaman (RA), the names of the hypocrites and he asked him not to divulge these to anyone. Umar (RA) was very apprehensive that he would be one of them and kept asking Hudhaifah (RA). Hudhaifah (RA) only assured him that he is not one of the hypocrites. Umar (RA) used to watch Hudhaifah's (RA) behavior during funerals of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). He would only participate in the funeral prayer if he saw Hudhaifah (RA) participating. The lesson to be learnt from this is that people should only judge the actions, not the people. Only God knows what the hearts of people harbor. People should only judge what they can see.

The verses describe the arrogance of the hypocrites and tell the Prophet (PBUH) that God has decreed that the hypocrites will not be forgiven. The verses also expose the strategy of the hypocrites to persecute and harass the believers whenever they are able to. They forgot that God owns the treasures of the heavens and the earth and only He can bless people with honor and dignity.

Then a command is issued to the believers, *“Believers, let not your wealth nor your children distract you from the remembrance of God. Those who do so, they are the losers. And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he would say, ‘My Lord, if only You delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous?’ But never will God delay a soul when its time has come; and God is well aware of what you do.”* Wealth and progeny are sources for distractions. God gave people the wealth and the family to support them in achieving the task that they were created for. The hearts should always be connected with God. The wealth has been given by God and should be spent the way that pleases Him. One should spend for the sake of God before it is too late. Everyone is destined to death and when the time comes no one can delay it.