

Surah 47. Muhammad

Asad: NOW WHEN you meet [in war] those who are bent on denying the truth,⁴ smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds;⁵ but thereafter [set them free,] either by an act of grace or against ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted:⁶ thus [shall it be]. And [know that] had God so willed, He could indeed punish them [Himself]; but [He wills you to struggle] so as to test you [all] by means of one another.⁷ And as for those who are slain in God's cause, never will He let their deeds go to waste:

Malik: Therefore, when you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield smite their necks and, when you have thoroughly subdued them, then take prisoners of war and bind them firmly. After the war lay down her burdens, then you have the choice whether you show them favor or accept ransom. Thus are you commanded. If Allah wanted, He Himself could have punished them; but He adopted this way so that He may test some of you by means of others. As for those who are slain in the cause of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost.

Pickthall: Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve, then it is smiting of the necks until, when ye have routed them, then making fast of bonds; and afterward either grace or ransom till the war lay down its burdens. That (is the ordinance). And if Allah willed He could have punished them (without you) but (thus it is ordained) that He may try some of you by means of others. And those who are slain in the way of Allah, He rendereth not their actions vain.

Yusuf Ali: Therefore when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight) smite at their necks; at length when ye have thoroughly subdued them bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it had been Allah's Will He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you some with others. But those who are slain in the way of Allah He will never let their deeds be lost. ^{4820 4821 4822 4823 4824}

Transliteration: Faitha laqeetumu allatheena kafaroo fadarba alrriqabi hatta itha athkhantumoohum fashuddoo alwathaqa faimma mannan baAAu waimma fidaan hatta tadaAAa alharbu awzarha thalika walaw yashho Allhu laintsara minhum walakin liyabluwa baAAu dakum bibaAAu din waallatheena qutiloo fee sabeeli Allhi falan yudilla aAAamalhum

Khatab:

So when you meet the disbelievers ?in battle?, strike ?their? necks until you have thoroughly subdued them, then bind them firmly. Later ?free them either as? an act of grace or by ransom until the war comes to an end. So will it be. Had Allah willed, He ?Himself? could have inflicted punishment on them. But He does ?this only to? test some of you by means of others. And those who are martyred in the cause of Allah,¹ He will never render their deeds void.

Author Comments

4 - Sc., "and on barring [others] from the path of God" - thus connecting with verse {1} and laying down the fundamental condition which alone justifies physical warfare: namely, a defence of the Faith and of freedom (cf. in this connection note [167] on [2:190](#)). In other words, when "those who are bent on denying

the truth" try to deprive the Muslims of their social and political liberty and thus to make it impossible for them to live in accordance with the principles of their faith, a just war (jihad) becomes allowable and, more than that, a duty. The whole of the above verse relates to war actually in progress (cf. note [168] on the first part of [2:191](#)); and there is no doubt that it was revealed after {22:39-40}, the earliest Qur'anic reference to physical warfare.

5 - Lit., "tighten the bond". According to almost all the commentators, this expression denotes the taking of prisoners of war. In addition, it may also refer to any sanctions or safeguards which would make it unlikely that the aggression could be resumed in the foreseeable future.

6 - Lit., "so that (hatta) the war may lay down its burdens". The term "ransom" comprises also, in this context, a mutual exchange of prisoners of war (Zamakhshari, quoting an opinion of Imam Ash-Shafi'i).

7 - I.e., so as to enable the believers to prove by actual deeds the depth of their faith and their readiness for self-sacrifice, and to enable the aggressors to realize how wrong they have been, and thus to bring them closer to the truth.

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Another possible interpretation: "And those who fight in the cause of Allah."

4820 - When once the fight (Jihad) is entered upon, carry it out with the utmost vigour, and strike home your blows at the most vital points (smite at their necks), both literally and figuratively. You cannot wage war with kid gloves.

4821 - In the first onset there must necessarily be great loss of life; "after the enemy's numbers are fairly thinned down, prisoners may be taken". With this passage may be compared viii. 67, and n. 1234.

4822 - When once the enemy is brought under control, generosity (i.e., the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom is recommended.

4823 - The Believers are tested in Faith by the extent to which they are willing to make sacrifices, even to the laying down of their lives; and the enemies are tested as to whether they would repent and let the righteous live in freedom and security.

4824 - There are two alternative readings, (1) qatalu, "those who fight", and (2) qutilu, "those who are slain". The meaning under the first reading is wider, and includes that under the second. I have translated on the basis of the second reading, which is in accordance with the text of the Royal Egyptian edition.

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