

Surah 9. At-Tauba

Asad: AND THERE came [unto the Apostle] such of the bedouin as had some excuse to offer, [with the request] that they be granted exemption,¹²² whereas those who were bent on giving the lie to God and His Apostle [simply] remained at home.¹²³ [And] grievous suffering is bound to befall such of them as are bent on denying the truth!

Malik: Some from among the desert Arabs also came with their excuses, begging exemption to stay behind; thus, those who lied to Allah and His Rasool sat inactive. Soon a painful punishment shall seize those of them who disbelieved.

Pickthall: And those among the wandering Arabs who had an excuse came in order that permission might be granted them. And those who lied to Allah and His messenger sat at home. A painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.

Yusuf Ali: And there were among the desert Arabs (also) Men who made excuses and came to claim exemption; and those who were false to Allah and His apostle (Merely) sat inactive. Soon will a grievous penalty seize the unbelievers among them.¹³⁴²

Transliteration: Wajaa almuAAaththiiruna mina alaAAarabi liyuthana lahum waqaAAada allatheena kathaboo Allaha warasoolahu sayuseebu allatheena kafaroo minhum AAathabun aleemun

Khatab:

Some nomadic Arabs ?also? came with excuses, seeking exemption. And those who were untrue to Allah and His Messenger remained behind ?with no excuse?. The unfaithful among them will be afflicted with a painful punishment.

Author Comments

122 - I.e., from participating in the expedition to Tabuk. The term al-mu'adhhirun connotes both "those having a valid excuse ('udhr)" and "those offering false excuses"; it is, therefore, best rendered as "such as had some excuse to offer". The specific mention of the a'rab ("bedouin") in this and the following passages probably arises from the fact that their attitude - positive or negative - towards Islam was of the greatest importance within the context of early Muslim history, inasmuch as the message of Muhammad could not obtain a real, lasting foothold in Arabia without first securing the allegiance of those warlike nomads and half-nomads, who constituted the great majority of the Peninsula's population. At the time when the Prophet was preparing to set out towards Tabuk, many of the already-converted tribesmen were willing to go to war under his leadership (and, in fact, did so), while others were afraid lest in their absence their encampments, denuded of man-power, be raided by hostile, as yet unconverted tribes (Razi); others, again, were simply averse to exposing themselves to the hardships of a campaign in distant lands, which did not seem to them to have any bearing on their own, immediate interests.

123 - I.e., without even caring to come to Medina and to excuse themselves.

1342 - Not only had the Hypocrites a nest in Madinah, but their tactics affected some of the village or desert Bedouins, who loved war and would have followed a standard of war even if no question of Faith or a sacred Cause was involved. But some of them, though professing Islam, were frightened by the hardships of the Tabuk expedition and the prospect of meeting the trained armies of the great Roman (Byzantine) Empire. They made all sorts of lying excuses, but really their want of faith made them ineligible for being enlisted in a sacred Cause, in the terms of ix. 46-47 and ix. 53-54. Some came to make excuses: other did not even come , but sat at home, ignoring the summons.

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