

Surah 24. An-Nur

- 24.1 A Surah which We have sent down and which We have ordained: in it have We sent down Clear Signs in order that ye may receive admonition. ²⁹⁵³
- 24.2 The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication flog each of them with a hundred stripes: let not compassion move you in their case in a matter prescribed by Allah if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment. ^{2954 2955 2956}
- 24.3 Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty or an Unbeliever nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden. ²⁹⁵⁷
- 24.4 And those who launch a charge against chaste women and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegation) flog them with eighty stripes: and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors ²⁹⁵⁸
- 24.5 Unless they repent thereafter and mend (their conduct): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. ²⁹⁵⁹
- 24.6 And for those who launch a charge against their spouses and have (in support) no evidence but their own their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth; ²⁹⁶⁰
- 24.7 And the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie.
- 24.8 But it would avert the punishment from the wife if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that (her husband) is telling a lie;
- 24.9 And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth.
- 24.10 If it were not for Allah's grace and mercy on you and that Allah is Oft-Returning Full of Wisdom (ye would be ruined indeed). ²⁹⁶¹
- 24.11 Those who brought forward the lie are a body among yourselves: think it not to be an evil to you: on the contrary it is good for you: to every man among them (will come the punishment) of the sin that he earned and to him who took on himself the lead among them will be a Penalty grievous. ^{2962 2963 2964}
- 24.12 Why did not Believers men and women when ye heard of the affair put the best construction on it in their own minds and say "This (charge) is an obvious lie"? ²⁹⁶⁵
- 24.13 Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? When they have not brought the witnesses such men in the sight of Allah (stand forth) themselves as liars! ²⁹⁶⁶
- 24.14 Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you in this world and the Hereafter a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair. ²⁹⁶⁷
- 24.15 Behold ye received it on your tongues and said out of your mouths things of which ye had no knowledge; and ye thought it to be a light matter while it was most serious in the sight of Allah. ²⁹⁶⁸
- 24.16 And why did ye not when ye heard it say "It is not right of us to speak of this: Glory to Allah! this is a most serious slander!" ²⁹⁶⁹
- 24.17 Allah doth admonish you that ye may never repeat such (conduct) if ye are (true) Believers.
- 24.18 And Allah makes the Signs plain to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.
- 24.19 Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: Allah knows and ye know not. ²⁹⁷⁰
- 24.20 Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you and that Allah is full of kindness and mercy (ye would be ruined indeed). ²⁹⁷¹

24.21 O ye who believe! follow not Satan's footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan he will (but) command what is shameful and wrong: and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you not one of you would ever have been pure: but Allah doth purify whom He pleases: and Allah is One Who hears and knows (all things). ^{2972 2973}

24.22 Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen those in want and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause: let them forgive and overlook: do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. ²⁹⁷⁴

24.23 Those who slander chaste women indiscreet but believing are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty ²⁹⁷⁵

24.24 On the Day when their tongues their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions. ²⁹⁷⁶

24.25 On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues and they will realize that Allah is the (very) Truth that makes all things manifest. ²⁹⁷⁷

24.26 Women impure are for men impure and men impure are for women impure; and women of purity are for men of purity and men of purity are for women of purity: these are not affected by what people say: for them there is forgiveness and a provision honorable. ^{2978 2979}

24.27 O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you in order that ye may heed (what is seemly). ²⁹⁸⁰

24.28 If ye find no one in the house enter not until permission is given to you: if ye are asked to go back go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that ye do. ²⁹⁸¹

24.29 It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in which serve some (other) use for you: and Allah has knowledge of what ye reveal and what ye conceal. ²⁹⁸²

24.30 Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. ²⁹⁸³

24.31 And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands their fathers their husbands' fathers their sons their husbands' sons their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or their women or the slaves whom their right hands possess or male servants free of physical needs or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah that ye may attain Bliss. ^{2984 2985 2986 2987}

24.32 Marry those among you who are single or the virtuous ones among your slaves male or female: if they are in poverty Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all and He knoweth all things. ^{2988 2989}

24.33 Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste until Allah gives them means out of His grace. And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum) give them such a deed if ye know any good in them; yea give them something yourselves out of the means which Allah has given to you. But force not your maids to prostitution when they desire chastity in order that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life. But if anyone compels them yet after such compulsion is Allah Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful (to them). ^{2990 2991 2992 2993 2994}

24.34 We have already sent down to you verses making things clear an illustration from (the story of) people who passed away before you and an admonition for those who fear (Allah). ²⁹⁹⁵

24.35 Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed Tree an Olive neither of the East nor of the West whose Oil is well-nigh luminous though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light. Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things. ^{2996 2997 2998 2999 3000 3001 3002 3003}

24.36 (Lit is such a light) in houses which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honor; for the celebration in them of His name: in them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings (again and again) ^{3004 3005}
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24.37 By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah nor from regular Prayer nor from the practice of regular Charity: their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and

eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new) 3007 3008

24.38 That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds and add even more for them out of His Grace: for Allah doth provide for those whom He will without measure. ³⁰⁰⁹

24.39 But the Unbelievers their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it he finds it to be nothing: but he finds Allah (ever) with him and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account. ^{3010 3011 3012}

24.40 Or (the Unbelievers' state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean overwhelmed with billow topped by billow topped by (dark) clouds: depths of darkness one above another: if a man stretches out his hand he can hardly see it! for any to whom Allah giveth not light there is no light! ^{3013 3014 3015}

24.41 Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise. And Allah knows well all that they do. ^{3016 3017}

24.42 Yea to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and to Allah is the final goal (of all). ³⁰¹⁸

24.43 Seest thou not that Allah makes the clouds move gently then joins them together then makes them into a heap? then wilt thou see rain issue forth from their midst. And He sends down from the sky mountain masses (of clouds) wherein is hail: He strikes therewith whom He pleases and He turns it away from whom He pleases. The vivid flash of His lightning well-nigh blinds the sight. ³⁰¹⁹

24.44 It is Allah Who alternates the Night and the Day: verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision! ³⁰²⁰

24.45 And Allah has created every animal from water: of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills: for verily Allah has power over all things. ^{3021 3022 3023}

24.46 We have indeed sent down Signs that make things manifest: and Allah guides whom He wills to a way that is straight.

24.47 They say "We believe in Allah and in the Apostle and we obey": but even after that some of them turn away: they are not (really) Believers. ³⁰²⁴

24.48 When they are summoned to Allah and His Apostle in order that He may judge between them behold some of them decline (to come).

24.49 But if the right is on their side they come to him with all submission. ³⁰²⁵

24.50 Is it that there is a disease in their hearts? Or do they doubt or are they in fear that Allah and His Apostle will deal unjustly with them? Nay it is they themselves who do wrong. ³⁰²⁶

24.51 The answer of the Believers when summoned to Allah and His Apostle in order that He may judge between them is no other than this: they say "We hear and we obey": it is such as these that will attain felicity. ^{3027 3028}

24.52 It is such as obey Allah and His Apostle and fear Allah and do right that will win (in the end).

24.53 They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that if only thou wouldst command them they would leave (their homes). Say: "Swear ye not; obedience is (more) reasonable: verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do." ³⁰²⁹

24.54 Say: "Obey Allah and obey the Apostle: but if ye turn away he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and ye for that placed on you. If ye obey him ye shall be on right guidance. The Apostle's duty is only to preach the clear (Message)." ³⁰³⁰

24.55 Allah has promised to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds that He will of a surety grant them in the land inheritance (of power) as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state) after the fear in which they (lived) to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.' If any do reject faith after this they are rebellious and wicked. ^{3031 3032}

24.56 So establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity: and obey the Apostle; that ye may receive mercy.

24.57 Never think thou that the Unbelievers are going to frustrate (Allah's Plan) on earth: their abode is the Fire and it is indeed an evil refuge!

24.58 O ye who believe! let those whom your right hands possess and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions before

morning prayer; the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat; and after the late-night prayer: these are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other: thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. **3033 3034 3035 3036**

24.59 But when the children among you come of age let them (also) ask for permission as do those senior to them (in age): thus does Allah make clear His Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. 3037 3038 3039

24.60 Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest: and Allah is One Who sees and knows all things. 3040 3041

24.61 it is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame nor in one afflicted with illness nor in yourselves that ye should eat in your own houses or those of your fathers or your mothers or your brothers or your sisters or your father's brothers or your father's sisters or your mother's brothers or your mother's sisters or in houses of which the keys are in your possession or in the house of a sincere friend of yours: there is no blame on you whether ye eat in company or separately. But if ye enter houses salute each other a greeting or blessing and purity as from Allah. Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: that ye may understand. 3042 3043 3044

24.62 Only those are Believers who believe in Allah and His Apostle: when they are with him on a matter requiring collective action they do not depart until they have asked for his leave: those who ask for thy leave are those who believe in Allah and His Apostle; so when they ask for thy leave for some business of theirs give leave to those of them whom thou wilt and ask Allah for their forgiveness: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. 3045 3046 3047

24.63 Deem not the summons of the Apostle among yourselves like the summons of one of you to another: Allah doth know those of you who slip away under shelter of some excuse: then let those beware who withstand the Apostle's order lest some trial befall them or a grievous Penalty be inflicted on them. 3048 3049

24.64 Be quite sure that to Allah doth belong whatever is in the heavens and on earth. Well doth He know what ye are intent upon: and one day they will be brought back to Him and He will tell them the truth of what they did: for Allah doth know all things. 3050 3051

Author Comments

2953 - It must not be thought that the checking of sex offences or of minor improprieties, that relate to sex or privacy, are matters that do not affect spiritual life in the highest degree. These matters are intimately connected with spiritual teaching such as Allah has sent down in this Sura. The emphasis is on "We": these things are not mere matters of convenience, but Allah has ordained them for our observance in life.

2954 - Zina includes sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not married to each other. It therefore applies both to adultery (which implies that one or both of the parties are married to a person or persons other than the ones concerned) and to fornication, which, in its strict signification, implies that both parties are unmarried. The law of marriage and divorce is made easy in Islam, so that there may be the less temptation for intercourse outside the well-defined incidents of marriage. This makes for greater self-respect for both man and woman. Other sex offences are also punishable, but this Section applies strictly to Zina as above defined. Although zina covers both fornication and adultery, in the opinion of Muslim jurists, the punishment laid down here applies only to unmarried persons. As for married persons, their punishment, according to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him), is stoning to death.

2955 - Cf. iv. 15, and n. 523.

2956 - The punishment should be open, in order to be deterrent.

2957 - Islam commands sex purity, for men and for women, at all times,-before marriage, during marriage, and after the dissolution of marriage. Those guilty of illicit practices are shut out of the marriage circle of chaste men and women.

2958 - The most serious notice is taken of people who put forward slanders or scandalous suggestions about women without adequate evidence. If anything is said against a woman's chastity, it should be supported by evidence twice as strong as would ordinarily be required for business transactions, or even in murder cases. That is, four witnesses would be required instead of two. Failing such preponderating evidence, the slanderer should himself be treated as a wicked transgressor and punished with eighty stripes. Not only would he be subjected to this disgraceful form of punishment, but he would be deprived of the citizen's right of giving evidence in all matters unless he repents and reforms, in which case he can be readmitted to be a competent witness. The verse lays down the punishment for slandering "chaste women", which by consensus of opinion also covers slandering chaste men. Chaste women have been specifically mentioned, according to Commentators, because slandering them is more abhorrent.

2959 - The punishment of stripes is inflicted in any case for unsupported slander. But the deprivation of the civic right of giving evidence can be cancelled by the man's subsequent conduct, if he repents, shows that he is sorry for what he did, and that he would not in future support by his statement anything for which he has not the fullest evidence. Secular courts do not enforce these principles, as their standards are lower than those which good Muslims set for themselves, but good Muslims must understand and act on the underlying principles, which protect the honour of womanhood.

2960 - The case of married persons is different from that of outsiders. If one of them accuses the other of unchastity, the accusation partly reflects on the accuser as well. Moreover, the link which unites married people, even where differences supervene, is sure to act as a steadying influence against the concoction of false charges of unchastity particularly where divorce is allowed (as in Islam) for reasons other than unchastity. Suppose a husband catches a wife in adultery. In the nature of things four witnesses-or even one outside witness-would be impossible. Yet after such an experience it is against human nature that he can live a normal married life. The matter is then left to the honour of the two spouses. If the husband can solemnly swear four times to the fact, and in addition invoke a curse on himself if he lies, that is prima

facie evidence of the wife's guilt. But if the wife swears similarly four times and similarly invokes a curse on herself, she is in law acquitted of the guilt. If she does not take this step, the charge is held proved and the punishment follows. In either case the marriage is dissolved, as it is against human nature that the parties can live together happily after such an incident.

2961 - Cf. xxiv. 11-14, and n. 2962, which illustrates the matter by a concrete instance.

2962 - The particular incident here referred to occurred on the return from the expedition to the Banui Mustaliq, A.H. 5-6. When the march was ordered, Hadhrat 'Aisha was not in her tent, having gone to search for a valuable necklace she had dropped. As her litter was veiled, it was not noticed that she was not in it, until the army reached the next halt. Meanwhile, finding the camp had gone, she sat down to rest, hoping that some one would come back to fetch her when her absence was noticed. It was night, and she fell asleep. Next morning she was found by Safwan, a Muhajir, who had been left behind the camp expressly to pick up anything inadvertently left behind. He put her on his camel and brought her, leading the camel on foot. This gave occasion to enemies to raise a malicious scandal. The ringleader among them was the chief of Madinah Hypocrites, 'Abudllah ibn Ubai, who is referred to in the last clause of this verse. He had other sins and enormities to his debit, and he was left to the punishment of an unrepentant sinner, for he died in that state. The minor tools were given the legal punishment of the law, and after penitence mended their lives. They made good.

2963 - It is worse for a scandal to be whispered about with bated breath, than that it should be brought into the light of day and disproved.

2964 - The ringleader: see n. 2962 above.

2965 - Both men and women were involved in spreading the scandal. Their obvious duty was to put the best, not the worst, construction on the acts of one of the "mothers of the Believers".

2966 - If any persons took it seriously, it was their duty to search for and produce the evidence, in the absence of which they themselves became guilty of slander.

2967 - Cf. xxiv. 10 above. It was Allah's mercy that saved them from many evil consequences, both in this life and in the Hereafter, -in this life, because the Prophet's wise measures nipped in the bud any incipient estrangement between those nearest and dearest to him, and from a spiritual aspect in that the minor agents in spreading the scandal repented and were forgiven. No doubts and divisions, no mutual distrust, were allowed to remain in their hearts after the whole matter had been cleared up.

2968 - There are three things here reprobated by way of moral teaching: (1) if others speak an evil word, that is no reason why you should allow it to defile your tongue; (2) if you get a thought or suspicion which is not based on your certain knowledge, do not give it currency by giving it expression; and (3) others may think it is a small matter to speak lightly of something which blasts a person's character or reputation: in the eyes of Allah it is a most serious matter in any case, but specially when it involves the honour and reputation of pious women.

2969 - The right course would have been to stop any further currency of false slanders by ignoring them and at least refusing to help in their circulation. The exclamation "Subhanaka", "Praise to Thee (O Allah)", or "Glory to Allah!" is an exclamation of surprise and disavowal as much as to say, "We do not believe it! And we shall have nothing to do with you, O false slanderers!"

2970 - What mischiefs can be planned by Evil to delude simple folk who mean no harm in their own minds but who by thoughtlessness are deluded step by step to become the instruments of Evil, may not be known to the most instructed of men, but it is all known to Allah. Man should therefore always be on his guard against the traps of Evil, and it is only Allah's grace that can save him.

2971 - Note the refrain that comes four times in this passage, "Were it not for the grace and, mercy of Allah..." Each time it has a different application. (1) In xxiv. 10, it was in connection with the accusation of infidelity by the man against his wife, they were both reminded of Allah's mercy and warned against suspicion and untruth. (2) In xxiv. 14, the Believers were told to be wary of false rumours lest they should cause pain and division among themselves: it is Allah's grace that keeps them united. (3) Here is an admonition for the future: there may be conspiracies and snares laid by evil against simple people; it is Allah's grace that protects them. (4) In xxiv. 21, the general warning is directed to the observance of purity in act and in thought, concerning one's self and concerning others: it is only Allah's grace that can keep that purity spotless, for He hears prayers and knows of all the snares that are spread in the path of the good.

2972 - See last note.

2973 - Spotless purity in thought, word, and deed, includes the disposition to put the best construction on the motives of others, so that we ascribe no evil motive to the seeming indiscretions of virtuous people. Such a high standard can only come by the grace of Allah, Who hears all prayers and knows all the temptations to which human nature is subject. His Will and Plan make both for spiritual protection and spiritual peace, and we must place ourselves trustingly in His hands.

2974 - The immediate reference was to Hadhrat Abu Bakr, the father of Hadhrat 'Aisha. He was blessed both with spiritual grace from Allah and with ample means, which he always used in the service of Islam and of Muslims. One of the slanderers of Hadhrat 'Aisha turned out to be Mistah, a cousin of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, whom he had been in the habit of supporting. Naturally Hadhrat Abu Bakr wished to stop that aid, but according to the highest standards of Muslim ethics he was asked to forgive and forget, which he did, with the happiest results to the peace and unity of the Muslim community. But the general application holds good for all time. A generous patron should not, in personal anger, withdraw his support even for serious faults if the delinquent repents and mends his ways. If Allah forgives us, who are we to refuse forgiveness to our fellows?

2975 - Good women are sometimes indiscreet because they think of no evil. But even such innocent indiscretion lands them, and those who hold them dear, in difficulties. Such was the case with Hadhrat 'Aisha, who was in extreme pain and anguish for a whole month because of the slanders spread about her. Her husband and her father were also placed in a most awkward predicament, considering their position and the great work in which they were engaged. But unprincipled people, who start false slanders, and their unthinking tools who help in spreading such slanders, are guilty of the gravest spiritual offence, and their worst punishment is the deprivation of Allah's grace, which is the meaning of a state of Curse.

2976 - Our own limbs and faculties are the strongest witnesses against us if we misuse them for evil deeds instead of using them for the good deeds for which they were given to us.

2977 - All that we thought of hiding will be clear as day before Allah's Judgment Seat, because He is the very essence of Truth and Reality-He is the true Light (xxiv. 35), of which all physical light is merely a type or reflection.

2978 - The pure consort with the pure, and the impure with the impure. If the impure, out of the impurity of their thoughts, or imaginations, impute any evil to the pure, the pure are not affected by it, but they should avoid all occasions for random talk.

2979 - Forgiveness for any indiscretion which they may have innocently committed, and spiritual provision or protection against the assaults of Evil. It is also meant that the more the satans attempt to defame or slander them, the more triumphantly will they be vindicated and provided with the physical and moral good which will advance their real life.

2980 - The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential to a refined life of goodness and purity. The English saying that an Englishman's home is his castle, suggests a certain amount of exclusiveness and defiance. The Muslim principle of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensures privacy without exclusiveness, and friendliness without undue familiarity.

2981 - That is, if no one replies; there may be people in the house not in a presentable state. Or, even if the house is empty, you have no right to enter it until you obtain the owner's permission, wherever he may be. The fact of your not receiving a reply does not entitle you to enter without permission. You should wait, or knock twice or three times, and withdraw in case no permission is received. If you are actually asked to withdraw, as the inmates are not in a condition to receive you, you should a fortiori withdraw, either for a time, or altogether, as the inmates may wish you to do. Even if they are your friends, you have no right to take them by surprise or enter against their wishes. Your own purity of life and conduct as well as of motives is thus tested.

2982 - The rule about dwelling-houses is strict, because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent, and well-ordered life. Such a rule of course does not apply to houses used for other useful purposes, such as an inn or caravanserai, or a shop, or a warehouse. But even here, of course, implied permission from the owner is necessary as a matter of common-sense. The question in this passage is that of refined privacy, not that of rights of ownership.

2983 - The rule of modesty applies to men as well as women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman (or even at a man) is a breach of refined manners. Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only "good form":

it is not only to guard the weaker sex, but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex.

2984 - The need for modesty is the same in both men and women. But on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom.

2985 - Zinat means both natural beauty and artificial ornaments. I think both are implied here, but chiefly the former. The woman is asked not to make a display of her figure except to the following classes of people: (1) her husband, (2) her near relatives whom a certain amount of negligence is permissible; (3) her women, (4) slaves, male and female, as they would be in constant attendance; but this item would now be blank, with the abolition of slavery; (5) men who are free from sexual desire and who usually frequent the houses; and (6) infants or small children before they get a sense of sex. Cf. also xxxiii. 59.

2986 - It is one of the tricks of showy or unchaste women to tinkle their ankle ornaments, to draw attention to themselves,

2987 - While all these details of the purity and good form of domestic life are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the chief object we should hold in view is our spiritual welfare. All our brief life on this earth is a probation, and we must make our individual, domestic, and social life all contribute to our holiness, so that we can get the real success and bliss which is the aim of our spiritual endeavor.

2988 - The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage. Single (ayama, plural of Aiyim) here means any one not in the bond of wedlock, whether unmarried or lawfully divorced, or widowed.

2989 - Cf. v. 57. Allah's mercy is for all: it is not confined to a class or grade of people.

2990 - A Muslim marriage requires some sort of a dower for the wife. If the man cannot afford that, he must wait and keep himself chaste. It is no excuse for him to say that he must satisfy his natural cravings within or outside marriage. It must be within marriage.

2991 - The law of slavery in the legal sense of the term is now obsolete. While it had any meaning, Islam made the slave's lot as easy as possible. A slave, male or female, could ask for conditional manumission by a written deed fixing the amount required for manumission and allowing the slave meanwhile to earn money by lawful means. Such a deed was not to be refused if the request was genuine and the slave had character. Not only that, but the master is directed to help with money out of his own resources in order to enable the slave to earn his or her own liberty.

2992 - Where slavery was legal, what is now called the "white slave traffic" was carried on by wicked people like 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, the Hypocrite leader at Madinah. This is absolutely condemned. While modern nations have abolished ordinary slavery, the "White Slave Traffic" is still a big social problem in individual States. Here it is absolutely condemned. No more despicable trade can be imagined.

2993 - I have translated "in" (literally, "if") by "when" because this is not a conditional clause but an explanatory clause, explaining the meaning of "force". "Forcing" a person necessarily means that it is against the wish or inclination of the person forced. Even if they were to give a formal consent, it is not valid.

2994 - The poor unfortunate girls, who are victims of such a nefarious trade, will yet find mercy from Allah, whose bounties extend to all His creatures.

2995 - This prepares the way for the magnificent Verse of Light that follows, and its sublime meaning.

2996 - Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of light, which contains layer upon layer of transcendent truth about spiritual mysteries. No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject. In these notes I propose to explain the simplest meaning of this passage.

2997 - The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is Allah. We can only think of Allah in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know, but physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: eg. (1) it is dependent upon some source external to itself; (2) it is a passing phenomenon; if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena; (3) it is dependent on space and time; its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands of years before it reaches the earth. The perfect Light of Allah is free from any such defects.

2998 - The first three points in the Parable center round the symbols of the Niche, the Lamp, and the Glass. (1) The Niche (Mishkat) is the little shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows. The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped to throw the light well into the room, and if the wall was white-washed, it also acted as a reflector: the opening in front made the way for the light. So with the spiritual Light; it is placed high, above worldly things; it has a niche or habitation of its own, in Revelation and other Signs of Allah; its access to men is by a special Way, open to all, yet closed to those who refuse its rays. (2) The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it; the Niche is actually made for it. (3) The Glass is the transparent medium through which the Light passes. On the one hand, it protects the light from moths and other forms of low life and from gusts of wind, and on the other, it transmits the light through a medium which is made up of and akin to the grosser substances of the earth (such as sand, soda, potash, etc.), so arranged as to admit the subtle to the gross by its transparency. So the spiritual Truth has to be filtered through human language or human intelligence to make it intelligible to mankind.

2999 - The glass by itself does not shine. But when the light comes into it, it shines like a brilliant star. So men of God, who preach Allah's Truth, are themselves illuminated by Allah's light and become the illuminating media through which that Light spreads and permeates human life.

3000 - The olive tree is not a very impressive tree in its outward appearance. Its leaves have a dull greenish-brown colour, and in size it is inconspicuous. But its oil is used in sacred ceremonies and forms a wholesome ingredient of food. The fruit has a specially fine flavour. Cf. n. 2880 to xxiii. 20. For the illuminating quality of its oil, see n. 3002 below.

3001 - This Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It is universal, for such is Allah's Light. As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different

way. An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the south aspect will give the sun's rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and vice versa in the southern hemisphere. But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day; it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So Allah's light is not localised or immature: it is perfect and universal.

3002 - Pure olive oil is beautiful in colour, consistency, and illuminating power. The world has tried all kinds of illuminants, and for economic reasons or convenience, one replaces another. But for coolness, comfort to the eyes, and steadiness, vegetable oils are superior to electricity, mineral oils, and animal oils. And among vegetable oils, olive oil takes a high place and deserves its sacred associations. Its purity is almost like light itself: you may suppose it to be almost light before it is lit. So with spiritual Truth: it illuminates the mind and understanding imperceptibly, almost before the human mind and heart have been consciously touched by it.

3003 - Glorious, illimitable Light, which cannot be described or measured. And there are grades and grades of it, passing transcendently into regions of spiritual height, which man's imagination can scarcely conceive of. The topmost pinnacle is the true prototypal Light, the real Light, of which all others were reflections, the Light of Allah.

3004 - The punctuation of the Arabic text makes it necessary to carry back the adverbial clause "in houses", to something in the last verse, say "Lit from a blessed Tree", -the intervening clauses being treated as parenthetical.

3005 - That is, in all places of pure worship; but some Commentators understand special Mosques, such as the Ka'ba in Makkah or Mosques in Madinah or Jerusalem; for these are specially held in honour.

3006 - In the evenings: the Arabic word is Asal, a plural of a plural, to imply emphasis: I have rendered that shade of meaning by adding the words "again and again".

3007 - "Remembrance of Allah" is wider than Prayer: it includes silent contemplation, and active service of

Allah and His creatures. The regular Prayers and regular Charity are the social acts performed through the organised community.

3008 - Some renderings suggest the effects of terror on the Day of Judgment. But here we are considering the case of the righteous, whose "fear" of Allah is akin to love and reverence and who (as the next verse shows) hope for the best reward from Allah. But the world they will meet will be a wholly changed world.

3009 - The best of the righteous do not deserve the reward that they get: all their faults are forgiven, and only their best actions are considered in the reward that they get. Nay, more! Out of the unbounded Grace of Allah even more is added to them. For in giving rewards, Allah's bounty is boundless.

3010 - We have had various metaphors to give us an idea of the beneficent Light of Allah. Now we have contrasted metaphors to enable us to see those who deny or refuse that Light, and are overwhelmed in utter darkness. The Light (of Allah) is an absolute Reality, and is mentioned first, and the souls that follow that Light are a reflected reality and are mentioned after the Light. On the other hand the Darkness is not a reality in itself, but a negation of reality; the reflected existences that refuse the Light are mentioned, and then their state, which is Unreality. Two metaphors are given: a mirage, in this verse, and the depths of darkness in the sea, in the next,

3011 - The mirage, of which I have seen several instances in the Arabian deserts and in Egypt, is a strange phenomenon of illusion. It is a trick of our vision. In the language of our Parable, it rejects the Light which shows us the Truth, and deceives us with Falsehood. A lonely traveller in a desert, nearly dying of thirst, sees a broad sheet of water. He goes in that direction, lured on and on, but finds nothing at all. He dies in protracted agony.

3012 - The rebel against Allah finds himself like the man deluded by a mirage. The Truth which he rejected is always with him. The mirage which he accepted leads to his destruction.

3013 - What a graphic picture of darkness in the depths of the Ocean, wave upon wave, and on top of all, dense dark clouds! There is so little light even in ordinary depths of the Ocean that fishes which live there lose their eyes as useless organs.

3014 - A contrast to "Light upon Light" in xxiv. 35 above.

3015 - The true source of Light in the world of Reality is Allah, and anyone who cuts himself off from that Light is in utter darkness indeed, for it is the negation of the only true light, and not merely relative darkness, like that which we see, say, in the shadows of moonlight.

3016 - Cf. xxi. 19-20.

3017 - All denizens of the heavens, such as angels, all denizens of the earth (including the waters) such as man, animals, insects, fishes, etc., and all denizens of the air, such as birds, celebrate the praises of Allah. Each has his own mode of prayer and praise. It is not necessarily with words, for language (as we know it) is peculiar to man. But actions and other modes of self-expression recognise and declare the Glory of Allah.

3018 - To Him we belong; and to Him we shall return. Not only we, but all Creation, proclaims this in the whole world.

3019 - Artists, or lovers of nature, or observers of clouds will appreciate this description of cloud effects- thin clouds floating about in fantastic shapes, joining together and taking body and substance, then emerging as heavy clouds heaped up, which condense and pour forth their rain. Then the heavy dark clouds in the upper regions, that bring hail,-how distinct and yet how similar! They are truly like mountain masses! And when the hailstones fall, how local their area! It hits some localities and leaves free others almost interlaced! And the lightning-how blinding flashes come from thunderous clouds! In this Book of Nature can we not see the hand of the powerful and beneficent Allah?

3020 - His power, wisdom, and goodness are shown no less in the regular phenomena of nature like the succession of Day and Night, than in the seasonal or seemingly irregular movements of clouds and rain

and hail and lightning. Those who have the spiritual vision can read this Book of Allah with delight and instruction.

3021 - Cf. xxi. 30, n. 2691. Protoplasm is the basis of all living matter, and "the vital power of protoplasm seems to depend on the constant presence of water".

3022 - The creeping things include worms and lowly forms of animal life as well as reptiles (like snakes), centipedes, spiders, and insects. Where these have legs they are small, and the description of creeping or crawling is more applicable to them than that of walking. Fishes and sea-animals generally cannot be said to walk: their swimming is like "creeping on their bellies". Two-legged animals include birds and man. Most of the mammals walk on four legs. This includes the whole of the animal world.

3023 - In Allah's Will and Plan, the variety of forms and habits among animals is adapted to their various modes of life and stages of biological development.

3024 - The Hypocrites, far from profiting from Allah's Light and Revelation, or declaring their open hostility, play fast and loose according to their selfish worldly aims.

3025 - The Hypocrites only wanted to go to the judge who they thought was likely to give judgment in their favour. If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily came to the Prophet, knowing that he was just and would judge in their favour, even against his own adherents. But if they had done wrong, an impartial judge was not to their taste. They would rather go to some one who would tip the balance in their favour! This form of selfishness and iniquity was not confined to the Hypocrites of Madinah. It is common in all ages, and should be suppressed.

3026 - The real fact is that their conscience smites them. They know their own iniquity, and do not wish to go before a just judge who would be open to no influence and would be sure to give a righteous decree.

3027 - Cf. ii. 285. Contrast with it the attitude of the Unbelievers or Hypocrites, who say aloud, "we hear", but intend in their hearts to disobey (ii. 93).

3028 - True happiness, whether here or in the Hereafter, is not to be attained by fraud or duplicity: it is the privilege of those who listen attentively to good counsel and carry it out in their lives.

3029 - Some people, especially hypocrites, give hyperbolic assurances, as did the Madinah Hypocrites to the holy Prophet, that they would do any bidding, even to the forsaking of their hearths and homes. To this they are ready to swear their strongest oaths, which mean nothing. They are asked to spare their oaths, and quietly do at least such unheroic duties as they are asked to do in every-day life. Idle words are not of the least value. Allah will judge by your actions, and He knows all, whether it is open or secret.

3030 - 'If you disobey Allah's commands as explained by His Prophet, you are not going to be forced. The Prophet's mission is to train your will and explain clearly all the implications of your conduct. The responsibility for your conduct rests entirely on yourselves.'

3031 - Three things are promised here, to those who have Faith and obey Allah's Law: (1) that they will inherit power and authority in the land, not for any selfish purposes of theirs nor by way of favouritism, but in order that they may maintain Allah's Law; (2) that the Religion of Right, which Allah has chosen for them, will be openly established, and will suppress all wrong and oppression; (3) that the righteous will live in peace and security, instead of having to suffer persecution, or leave their hearths and homes for the cause of Allah, or practise the rites of their Faith in secret.

3032 - If this verse was revealed about the time of the Battle of the Ditch (Khandaq), also called the Battle of the Confederates (Ahzab), A.H. 4-5, we can imagine the comfort it gave to the Muslims who were besieged in Madinah by a force ten times their number. The Muslims then fived in a state of great suspense and danger, and under arms for days on end. (See xxxiii. 9-20). The security and authority they were promised came to them subsequently in abundant measures.

3033 - We now come to rules of decorum within the family circle in refined society. Servants and children

have rather more freedom of access, as they come and go at all hours, and there is less ceremony with them. But even in their case there are limitations. During the night, before morning prayer, i.e., before dawn, they must discreetly ask for permission before they enter, partly because they must not unnecessarily disturb people asleep, and partly because the people are then undressed. The same applies to the time for the midday siesta, and again to the time after night prayers, when people usually undress and tum in to sleep. For grown-ups the rule is stricter: they must ask permission to come in at all times (xxiv. 59).

3034 - This would mean slaves in a regime of slavery.

3035 - I have translated "come of age" euphemistically for "attain the age of puberty".

3036 - It is a mark of refinement for ladies and gentlemen not to be slipshod or vulgarly familiar, in dress, manners, or speech; and Islam aims at making every Muslim man or woman, however humble in station, a refined gentleman or lady, so that he or she can climb the ladder of spiritual development with humble confidence in Allah, and with the cooperation of his brothers and sisters in Islam. The principles here laid down apply, if they are interpreted with due elasticity, even if social and domestic habits change, with changes in climate or in racial and personal habits. Punctilious self-respect and respect for others, in small things as well as great, are the key-notes in these simple rules of etiquette.

3037 - Children among you: i.e., in your house, not necessarily your own children. All in the house, including the stranger within your gate, must conform to these wholesome rules.

3038 - Those before them, i.e., those who have already been mentioned in the previous verse. It is suggested that each generation as it grows up should follow the wholesome traditions of its predecessors. While they were children, they behaved like children: when they grow up, they must behave like grown-ups.

3039 - The refrain connects up this verse with the last verse, whose meaning is completed here. The slight variation ("His Signs" here, against "the Signs" there) shows that this verse is more personal, as referring to children who have now become responsible men and women.

3040 - For elderly women in the home the rules of dress and decorum are not so exacting as for younger women, but they are also enjoined to study modesty, both because it is good in itself, and as an example to the younger people.

3041 - Another example of a refrain: see n. 3039 above. Verses 58 and 59 were closer connected: their refrain was practically identical. This verse, though ancillary, is less closely connected: its refrain comes in like a half-note in a melody.

3042 - There were various Arab superstitions and fancies which are combated and rejected here. (1) The blind, or the halt, or those afflicted with serious disease were supposed to be objects of divine displeasure, and as such not fit to be associated with us in meals in our houses: we are not to entertain such a thought, as we are not judges of the causes of people's misfortunes, which deserve our sympathy and kindness. (2) It was considered unbecoming to take meals in the houses of near relatives: this taboo is not approved. (3) A similar superstition about houses in our possession but not in our actual occupation is disapproved. (4) If people think they should not fall under obligation to casual friends, that does not apply to a sincere friend, in whose company a meal is not to be rejected, but welcomed. (5) If people make a superstition either that they should always eat separately, or that they must always eat in company, as some people weary of their own company think, either of them is wrong. Man is free and should regulate his life according to needs and circumstances.

3043 - The shades of meaning in Salam are explained in n. 2512 to xix. 62. Here, we were first told that we might accept hospitality and good fellowship in each other's houses. Now we are told what spirit should animate us in doing so. It should not be a spirit only of self-satisfaction in a worldly sense. It should rather be a spirit of good-will in the highest spiritual sense of the term-purity of motives and purity of life, as in the sight of Allah.

3044 - See notes 3039 and 3041 above. The refrain comes again, in a different form, closing the argument from a different point of view.

3045 - Matter requiring collective action: anything that affects the Community as a whole: Jumu'a and 'Id prayers are periodical occasions of this kind, but what is meant here is, I think, joint consultations with a

view to joint undertakings, such as a Jihad, or some kind of organisation in peace.

3046 - That is, those to whom, in the exercise of your impartial discretion, you think it expedient to give leave. "Will", unless the context shows otherwise, means "right will", not a will without any definite principle behind it.

3047 - In important matters of general consultation, even though leave of absence is given on sufficient excuse, it implies some defect in duty on the part of the person to whom the leave is given, and therefore the need of forgiveness from Him to Whom we owe duty in a perfect measure.

3048 - Three significations are possible. One is that adopted in the Translation, which agrees with the view of most Commentators. Another would be: 'Do not think that the prayer of the Prophet of Allah is like your ordinary requests to another: the Prophet's prayer will be about serious matters and will be accepted by Allah'. A third interpretation would be: 'Do not address the Prophet familiarly as you would address one another: use proper terms of respect for him.'

3049 - The "trial" is understood to be some misfortune in this life, and the "grievous Penalty" to be the punishment in the Hereafter.

3050 - The condition or position you are in, the motives which actuate you, and the ends you have in view.

3051 - Things misunderstood or maligned, falsely praised or held in honour, or fraudulently shown to be good when they are evil-everything will be revealed in its true light on the Day of final Judgment.

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