

An-Nisa (The Women) [4:83]

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ۗ وَلَوْ
رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ
مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا

قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

When there comes to them some matter touching (Public) safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have tested it from them (direct). Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

QUR'AN: And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it: *al-Idha'ah* (to publish, to spread, to announce). The verse contains a sort of condemnation and reproach to them for rumor-mongering. The following sentence, *and were it not for the grace of Allah upon and His mercy, you would have certainly followed the Satan, save a few*, clearly shows that the believers were in danger of going astray because of this adverse propaganda. The danger was of disobeying the Prophet (S); because this is the theme of these verses. This view is supported by the next verse where the Prophet (S) is ordered to fight the disbelievers even if he remained along without any helper.

All this together proves that the “the news of security and fear” refers to the false rumors which the disbelievers’ agents used to bring to Madina for creating disharmony and discord among the believers; and the believers of weaker faith spread it without thinking over it. This in its turn caused loss of courage and vigor in believers. However, Allah saved them from following those satans who hadbrought such news for discouraging the believers.

These verses fit completely on the events of the Lesser Badr (al-Mizan, [Eng.], vol.7, pp. 110-13 [tr.]), which was described in the chapter of “The House of ‘Imran”. The verses agree in theme with those in that chapter, as will be clear on meditation.

Allah says there: (As for) *those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger (even) after the wound had afflicted them, those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward. Those to whom the people said: "Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them"; but this (only) increased their faith, and they said: "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent protector is (He)". So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of the mighty grace. That is only the Satan that frightens his friends; so do not fear them, and fear Me if you are Believers (3:172-5).*

As you see, these verses describe how the Messenger of Allah (S) was calling the people, "after the wound had afflicted them" in the calamity of Uhud, to come with him to meet the disbelievers, and how some people were demoralizing the believers, trying to turn them away from the Prophet (S) and frightening them that the polytheists were gathered together against the believers. Then the verses assert that all this was a plan of the Satan who spoke through his friends; and exhort the believers not to fear the Satan and his friends; rather they should fear Allah if they were believers.

Ponder on these verses and then again on the verses under discussion (*And when there comes to them news of security or fear.....*). You will find no room for doubt that the verses under discussion too describe the same episode of the Lesser Badr. The Qur'an includes that episode in the list of the behaviors of which it blames the believers of the weaker faith. For example: *but when fighting was prescribed for them ...; "Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us?" ... and if a benefit comes to them ...; And they say: "Obedience".* And then it goes on to say in the same tone: *"And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it."*

QUR'AN: and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out the truth of it, would have known it: Here they are not required to refer it to Allah as was done in the preceding verse 59: *then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the last day.* It is because in that verse the talk was about a disputed legislative order; and no one has any authority in that field except Allah and His Messenger. But in the verse under discussion they are told to refer a news of security or fear, and such a news cannot be referred to Allah and His book; the people who could decide about it were the Messenger and those in authority among them. If the news were referred to them they could find out its reality and explain to the believers whether it was true or false, right or wrong.

The knowledge [in "would have known"] means distinguishing truth from falsehood and right from wrong; it is the same connotation as is found in the verses: *that Allah might know who fears Him in secret (5:94); And most certainly Allah will know those who believe, and most certainly He will know the hypocrites (29:11)*

Al-Istinbaat (to draw out a talk from ambiguity to distinctness and knowledge); it is derived from *an-nabat* (to gush out, to stream forth). The phrase “those among them who (can) draw out the truth of it”, may point to the Messenger of Allah (S) and those in authority; that they may investigate the matter to find out the truth. Or, it may point to those who are required to refer it to the Messenger and the people of authority; in that case, it would mean that the believers would know the truth as shown by the Messenger of Allah (S) and those in authority.

According to the former interpretation (which is the obvious meaning of the verse), the verse says that the Messenger and the people of authority will distinguish the truth if they draw out the reality, that is, if they think that doing so is in the interest of religion and society. According to the second interpretation, it will mean: Those believers who ask and are eager to know the truth of the matter will know it [from the Messenger and the people of authority].

The phrase, *ulu 'l-amr* (those vested with authority; those in authority) has the same connotations in the preceding verse 59: *O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you.* As described there, the exegetes have differed much in the explanation of this phrase; however, mainly there are five interpretations. The meaning which we have mentioned here is more obvious from this verse [as is explained below].

1. The view that *ulu 'l-amr* means the leaders of the fighting detachments is not relevant here. Those leaders had no authority except over a particular band of fighters in a particular combat; they had no knowledge or authority beyond that. But the verse here talks about something much bigger and more important: Disturbance of security, spreading of fear and general fight which the polytheists caused by infiltrating spies and secret agents who spread rumors to demoralize the believer. What concern the leaders of fighting bands had with such matters? How could they explain the truth otherwise of such news if the people referred it to them?

2. The opinion that *ulu 'l-amr* means scholars is equally irrelevant. The scholars – and in that era they were the narrators of traditions, jurists, reciters of Qur'an and theologians – had expertise in tradition, jurisprudence, etc. But this verse speaks about matters of security and general feeling of terror; it is concerned with such news which was deeply connected with political affairs, which if ignored or wrongly handled could disturb the Muslims' lives and result in such sociological calamities which no reformer could ever put right. It could nullify the nation's endeavors in the path of its felicity; or could rob them of their supremacy and make them prey of humiliation and degradation, or leave them to be killed or imprisoned. What expertise did the scholars – in their capacity as narrators of traditions, experts of jurisprudence or reciters of Qur'an and so on – have in these matters, that Allah would order the people to refer such news to them? How could they solve such problems in the political arena?

3. The opinion that it refers to the 'rightly guided' caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali) is more baseless. First of all, there is no proof for it in the Book of Allah or a definitely accepted tradition. Secondly, we have a right to ask: Was the order given in this verse limited to the time of the Prophet (S)? Or, was it general – for his time as well as after him? If it was meant for his time only, then the four personalities should have been known as the people of authority to all the people and particularly to the Companions of the Prophet (S); but the history and traditions do not record any such especial status for them at all. In case it was valid for the post-Prophetic era too, then its validity was bound to expire after those four caliphs had passed away. If so, then the verse should have contained some indication to that effect as is the case with other verses which announce some especial rules for the Prophet (S); but the verse does not hint any such limitation.

4. The interpretation of *ulu 'l-amr* as the people who 'tie and open' the influential persons, is equally out of place. Such exegetes know that there was no group, in the days of the Prophet (S) known as *ahlu 'l-halli wa 'l-'aqd*, like other civilized societies which do have well-defined committees and councils, e.g. cabinet of ministers, delegations sent to conferences, etc. At that time the only rule implemented in the *ummah* was of Allah and His Messenger. This difficulty compelled him to say that *ulu 'l-amr* were those Companions whose advice was sought and whom the Prophet (S) consulted.

But, the fact remains that the Prophet (S) included in his consultations not only the believers but even hypocrites like 'Abdullah ibn Abi and his band. The story of his consultation in the battle of Uhud is well-known. How can Allah order the believers to refer such sensitive news to such people?

Moreover, no one denies that ‘Abdu ‘r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf was among those who had this status in the life of the Prophet (S) and even after him. And these verses, which admonish the believers of weaker faith and put them to shame for what they had done, have begun with exposing him and his group in these words: *Have you not seen those to whom it was said: “Withhold your hands ...”* This tradition has been narrated by an-Nasa’I (in his *as-Sahih*), al-Hakim (in his *al-Mustadrak*) declaring that it is a correct tradition) and at-Tabari and others in their books of *tafsir* (commentary). And the said traditions have been given under “Traditions” under the preceding verses. Keeping this in view, how can one say that the believers were ordered to refer this matter to such people?

Now, remains only the fifth interpretation which we had preferred under the verse: *obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you ... (4:59)*. [That is: The *ulu ‘l-amr* are the Twelve sinless successors of the Holy Prophet (S).

QUR’AN: and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have certainly followed the Satan save a few: As stated earlier, the verses apparently point to the events of the Lesser Badr when Abu Sufyan had sent Na’im ibn Mas’ud al-Ashja’I to Medina to spread fear and fright among the people in order that they should not go forth to Badr. Hence, following of Satan means acceptance of the said news and failure to go to Badr.

In that case, the exception, “save a few”, is quite in place; there is no need to strive artfully and stretch its meaning. Na’im had informed the Muslims that Abu Sufyan had gathered many groups and readied a huge armies; therefore, the Muslims should not go out to fight against them, otherwise they (the Muslims) would be annihilated. This rumor demoralized the people and they offered many excuses for not going to Badr. Only the Prophet (S) and a few persons nearest to him remained steadfast, and it is they who are mentioned in the exception phrase, “save a few”. Most of the people had wavered and tried to avoid going out, except a few steadfast ones; then some more joined them and the group proceeded out.

This interpretation of the exception clause is supported by the earlier-mentioned context and association, and the meaning is quite clear.

The exegetes have, however, interpreted this clause in various artful ways, none of them free from distortion or misrepresentation. For example:

1. The grace and mercy of Allah points to the divine guidance which led them to the obedience of Allah, His Messenger and those in authority; and the excepted 'few' refers to the good-natured pure-hearted believers.. Thus, the verse means: If Allah had not guided you to the obedience by ordering you to refer the matter to those in authority, you would certainly have followed the Satan by falling into error and going astray, except a few good-natured believers among you who would not have deviated from truth and goodness.

COMMENT: This interpretation confines the divine grace and mercy to a certain order while there is no reason for such restriction. It is not in keeping with the Qur'anic style. Moreover, the verse apparently describes Allah's favor for something which had already passed and was completed.

2. The verse means what it apparently says. The believers of weaker faith need extra grace and mercy from Allah, although the sincere ones too cannot manage without divine care.

COMMENT: If it is its apparent meaning, then the Qur'an, in its sublime literary style, must have rebutted it here and now. But it has not. Allah says: *and were it not for Allah's Grace upon you and His Mercy, no one of you would have ever been pure* (24:21); and He says to His Prophet (S) who was the best of human beings: *And had it not been that We had already established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little; in that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death ...* (17:74-75).

3. The divine grace and mercy means the Qur'an and the Prophet (S).
4. It means the victory. The exception then is perfectly in place; because the majority stands firm on truth only when their hearts are happy as a result of victory and similar [worldly] benefits, which prove to them that God cares for them. Otherwise, if they were to taste bitter truth, then only a few believers would submit to it, that is, those only who might be having deep insight of the religion.
5. The exception, "save a few", is related to the verb, "they spread it".
6. No. It is related to the verb: *who (can) draw out the truth of it*.
7. The exception is in word only; it actually has the connotation of comprehensiveness. Thus the verse actually means: 'and were it not for the divine grace and mercy, all of you would have certainly followed the Satan'. It is not unlike the verse: *We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allah please* (87:6-7). Because in this case too, the exception emphasizes the comprehensiveness of 'not forgetting'.

COMMENTS: All these explanations are merely literary affection and trickery.

QUR'AN: *Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed only except in relation to yourself, and rouse the believers to ardor ... exemplary punishment:* *al-Taklif* (is derived from *al-kuflah* (discomfort, hardship) and means imposition of duty and responsibility, because the person concerned undergoes hardship in discharging his duties. *At-Tankil* is derived from *an-nakaal* (punishment). According to *Majma 'u l-bayaan*, it means: a punishment which discourages the guilty from committing that error again and makes him into a lesson to others; in short, a punishment fear for which prevents people from doing such mischief in future.

“*Fa*” (then, so) in “Fight then in Allah’s way” signifies that the order to fight, [even alone, if necessary] is based on the sum-total of the preceding verses, that is, the people’s apathy and lethargy in going forth to face the enemy. It is clearly reflected in the sentences that follow: “this is not imposed only except in relation to yourself ...” The meaning, therefore, is as follows: As they are lethargic concerning *Jihad* and are unwilling to fight, then you, O Messenger of Allah! should fight the unbelievers on your own; do not be disheartened because of their apathy and disobedience of the divine command; you will not be asked about their obligation, you are responsible for your own duties. As for the others, your only responsibility is to exhort and rouse them to fight. Therefore, you go forth for fighting and at the same time rouse the believers to ardor. May be, in this way Allah will prevent the unbelievers from fighting. The sentence, “this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself”, actually means, ‘except concerning your own deed’. In other words, there is in this excepted clause a deleted first construct of possessive case.

“may be Allah will restrain ...”: It was mentioned that ‘*asa* (may be) expresses hope. That hope can be found in the mind of the speaker, or the addressee, or it may arise because of the situation. As such, there is no need to assert that ‘may be’, when used by Allah, denotes certainty.

Through this verse, Allah further reviles those people who showed apathy towards *Jihad* until Allah ordered His Prophet to go forth for fighting alone; and told him to turn aside from those sluggish people. He should not exhort them to answer the call for *jihad*; rather he should leave them alone. He should not be discouraged by their behavior. His only responsibility is in relation to his own self; apart from that, he should rouse the believers to ardor – and then let him who wants answer the call, and him who wants disobey Allah and His Prophet.

TRADITIONS

[al-Kulayni narrates] through his chains from Muhammad ibn ‘Ajlaan that he said: “I heard Abu ‘Abdillah (a.s.) saying: ‘Allah had put some people to shame because of their spreading [rumors], as He, the Mighty, the Great, says: *And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it.* Therefore, take care not to spread [rumors].’” (*al-Kafi*).

Also he narrates from ‘Abdu ‘l-Hamid ibn Abi ‘d-Daylam from Abu Abdillah (a.s.) that he said: “Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has said: *Obey Allah and the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you; also He has said: and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out the truth in it would have known it.* Thus he has returned the people to *ulu ‘l-amr* from among them, ordering them (the people) to obey them (*ulu ‘l-amr*) and refer all affairs to them.” (*ibid*)

The author says: This *hadith* supports the explanation given by us that *ulu ‘l-amr* in this verse refers to the same Imams who were mentioned in the 59th verse.

Abdullah ibn ‘Ajlaan narrates from Abu Ja’far (AS) about the words of Allah: *and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them*, that he (the Imam, a.s.) said: “They are the Imams.” (*at-Tafsir, al-Ayyashi*)

The author says: This meaning has also been narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn Jundab from ar-Ridha (a.s.) in a letter which the Imam (a.s.) had written about al-Waqifiyyah. The same meaning is narrated by al-Mufid in *al-Ikhtisas* from Ishaq ibn ‘Ammar from as-Sadiq (a.s.), *inter alia*, in a long tradition.

Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl narrates from Abu ‘l-Hasan (AS) about the word of Allah: *and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy*, that [the Imam, a.s.] said: “Grace is the Messenger of Allah and His mercy is the Commander of the Believers.” (*at-Tafsir, al-Ayyashi*).

Zurarah has narrated from Abu Ja’far (a.s.), and Humran from Abu ‘Abdillah (a.s.), that they said: “Allah’s grace is His Messenger and His mercy is *al-wilayah* (love and obedience) of the Imams.” (*ibid*)

Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl narrates from al-‘Abdu ‘s-Salih [the 7th Imam, a.s.] that he said: “The mercy is the Messenger of Allah (S) and the grace, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.)” (*ibid*).

The author says: These traditions are based on the flow of the Qur'an; and they explain the divine grace and mercy in terms of messengership and imamate. These are the two connected ropes with which Allah has rescued us from the pit of straying and the trap of the Satan. One of them is the source of bringing the Truth, while the other is the means of keeping it alive. The last tradition is more in keeping with the Qur'anic point of view, because Allah has named His Messenger (S) 'Mercy', as He says in His book: *And we have not sent you but as a mercy to the world (21:107)*.

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

In this verse Allah again invites people to refer to the Holy Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt (ulil azm-see the commentary of verse 59 of this surah) all their affairs and problems because they alone know the truth and are authorised to guide; and if they do not, surely they will go astray in the direction of Shaytan.

And had there not been Allah's grace (fadl) and mercy (rahmat) present among the Muslims, they would also have lived in total darkness of infidelity. Fadl and rahmat stand for the Holy Prophet and Ali ibn abi Talib. In the "feast of the near relatives" when the Holy Prophet had said that he had been commanded by Allah to call them to His worship, therefore, who would, among them, testify to his prophethood and join him to support his mission and be his brother, lieutenant, and successor, it was Ali who stood up and offered his services unconditionally.

Then the Holy Prophet said, "Verily Ali is my brother and my successor. From this day it has been made obligatory upon everyone to obey the authority of Ali." (Ibn Jarir Tabari, Ahmed ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Hakim in Mustadrak).

So, from the "feast of the near relatives" to 11 Hijra, Ali stood by the Holy Prophet and supported him in his divine mission. In 11 Hijra the Holy Prophet declared at Ghadir Khum that of whomsoever he was the lord-master Ali was his lord-master (see commentary of al-Maidah: 67).

Ibn Hajar Makki writes in Sawa-iq Muhiraga that Fadl in verse 54 of al-Nisa refers to the Ahl ul Bayt, and Tabari in Majmaul Bayan confirms it.

Please refer to the commentary of al-Hud: 17 to know the authentic references which say that shahidun and imaman wa rahmatan (witness, guide and mercy) was Imam Ali ibn abi Talib. Also refer to the well-known books of history which clearly mention the decisive role Ali played in the battles of Badr, Uhad, Khandaq, Khaybar and many other wars, to confirm that it was Ali who had saved the Muslim ummah from total destruction. The Holy Prophet showed the right path and Ali guarded it.

Ali has been described as the "total faith" by the Holy Prophet in the battle of Khandaq; and after his decisive victory over Amr bin Abduwad which created terror in the hearts of a very large army of 12000 soldiers (refer to the commentary of al-Baqarah: 214 and 251), the Holy Prophet declared that "one strike of Ali, on the day of Khandaq, is superior to all worship of both the worlds," because if this one strike were not dealt there would have been no Muslims on the face of the earth.

AYATULLAH KAMAL FAQIH IMANI AND SEVERAL SCHOLARS

Spreading private news and also rumors have always been injurious to Muslims. Difusion of secret news usually originates from these motives: simple - mindedness, vengeance, infliction, being subject to the will of others greed in materials, gaudiness expression of information, etc. For the comprehensiveness that Islam has, it has referred to this subject and in this verse, it blames the divulgence of military secrets. It considers narrating the information of victory or failure before offering them to the leaders as the causes of 'false pride' and 'unappropriate fear from the fanciful enemy'. Had the warnings and the graces of Allah not existed the Muslims would fall in this Satanic path (the divulgence of secrets) .

Therefore, spreading gossip is one of the meapons of the hypocrites. However, the news of the battle-field and military secrets must reach a central office and, after recognizing and evaluating them, some convenient part of them may be spread.

Hence, spreading military news and refraining from referring to the divine leaders is a kind of obedience from Satan.

Of course, the military and political affairs, together with leading the security news and social secrets, should be controlled under an administration that consists of an independent judgement and deduction this matter is among the duties of the rank of leadership. That is why there is a close connection between mastership and Islamic jurisprudence.

" And when there comes unto them a news of security or fear, they spread it abroad; where as had they referred it to the messenger and those who investigate matters would have known it (the truth); and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would certainly have followed Satan, except a few."