

At-Tauba

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Introduction

Surah *At-Tauba* was revealed in *Madinah* and as mentioned earlier, it forms a pair with surah *Al-Anfal*. It has 129 *ayaat* and can be divided into four parts with regard to the period of revelation of its discourses. Some of the scholars of exegesis have not been able to highlight the division of its *ayaat* with respect to its time of revelation. The first six *ayaat* and the *ayaat* from 25 to 37 were revealed near the end of 9th A.H on the occasion of the Pilgrimage, when the Prophet (SAW) dispatched his cousin Ali (RAA) to follow Abu Bakr (RAA), who had already left for *Makkah* as leader of the Pilgrims to the *Ka'bah*. The Prophet (SAW) instructed Ali (RAA) to deliver the discourse before the representatives of the different clans of Arabia so as to inform them of the new policy towards the idolaters of Arabia. The *ayaat* from 7 to 24 were revealed much earlier in 8 A.H., before the conquest of *Makkah*, while the *ayaat* from 38 to 72 were revealed in 9 A.H. in the month of *Rajab*, when the Prophet (SAW) was preparing for the battle of *Tabuk*. The last discourse of this surah from ayat 72 to ayah 129, were revealed in the same year i.e. 9 A.H, in the month of *Dhul-Qa'dah*.

Due to the peculiar nature of this surah, it would be appropriate at this point to elaborate the main aspects of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in order to fully grasp the meaning of this noble surah. The Prophet (SAW) was sent as a Messenger to the whole of Arabia and this is one aspect of his prophethood known as *Be'sat Al-Khasa*. The other aspect of his prophethood is *Be'sat Al-'Aamah* i.e. he was sent as a Messenger for all mankind for all times to come. The first mission of his prophethood i.e. to establish Allah's *Deen* in the whole of Arabian peninsula was accomplished in the first twenty years of his prophethood. He eradicated *Shirk* from all parts of Arabia and brought about a revolution based on Islamic monotheism. During these years, he did not dispatch any of his Companions (RAA) to any place outside the Arabian peninsula to call them towards Islam. This was because of his *Be'sat Al-Khasa*, which was finally accomplished with the peace treaty of *Hudaibiyah*. By that time, one-third of Arabia had come under Islam which had established itself as a powerful, well organized and civilized Islamic state. This treaty further

created opportunities for Islam to spread its influence in the comparatively peaceful atmosphere created by it and to show the Non-Muslims that it was indeed a force to reckon with. After this treaty, some other important events also took place, that sealed his mission as a Messenger to the Arabs. This includes the conquest of *Makkah* and the victory over the *Jews* in the battle of *Khaybar* in 9th A.H, after which all resistance and provocative activities from the pagan Arabs were vanquished. This is why the disbelievers and idolaters of Arabia were then given an ultimatum to either embrace Islam or leave the Arabian peninsula, because the mission of the Prophet (SAW) as a Messenger to the Arabs had already been accomplished and now they had no other option but to accept Islam or they themselves will be responsible for the final installment of the punishment by Allah (SWT) which had initiated earlier with their humiliating defeat in the battle of *Badr*.

After these events pertaining to his *Be'sat Al-Khasa*, the second aspect of the Prophet's prophethood i.e. *Be'sat Al-Aamah* was initiated with the Prophet's sending his emissaries and letters to the emperors of Rome, Persia and Egypt, which resulted in some important battles like *Mu'tah* and *Tabuk*. Thus these are the two aspects of the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW), relatively distinct in nature. One of the distinctions that we see is that the pagan Arabs were not given any respite after the conquest of *Makkah*, for they were asked to either leave the Arabian peninsula or to accept Islam. This was because they were the original recipients of the Divine revelation and it was much easier for them to understand and comprehend it when it was being revealed in their own language and on a Prophet (SAW) who was from amongst them. But on the other hand, the Ahl-e-Kitab (people of the book) were given an option to either embrace Islam or pay *Jizyah* (tax).

At this point it seems appropriate to mention that the mission to make Allah's *Deen* dominant over all the religions of the world was no doubt initiated by the Prophet (SAW), but its accomplishment has been assigned to his *Ummah*, and thus they will be held responsible for that. Now we proceed with the translation and brief explanation of the ayaat of this surah.

(1) "A declaration of immunity from Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) to those of the idolaters, with whom you have made a treaty." This *ayah* announces the disavowal by

Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) unto the idolaters of Arabia. All of the treaties were abrogated except for those described in the following *ayaat*. It should also be mentioned that this surah does not start with 'Bismillah' as do all other surahs in the *Qur'an*, because 'Bismillah' is an assurance of protection and mercy and as per report of Ali (RAA) this surah was revealed with a sword in its hand, and thus could not have the assurance of peace and mercy for the disbelievers.

(2) *"So travel freely for four months throughout the land, but know that you cannot escape Allah (SWT), and Allah (SWT) will disgrace the disbelievers."* All of the disbelievers and idolaters of *Makkah* were allowed a respite of four months to leave the Arabian peninsula or embrace Islam. This refers to all those who were covered by some treaty without a fixed time limit and those whose treaties ended in less than four months. Then they were told to know that they could not escape Allah's decision, for He would surely humiliate the disbelievers.

(3) *"And a declaration from Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) to mankind on this day of the great Pilgrimage that Allah (SWT) is free from (all) obligations to the idolaters and so is His Messenger (SAW). So if you repent, it is better for you, but if you turn away, then know that you cannot escape Allah (SWT). And give tidings of a painful torment to those who disbelieve."* In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) instructs the Prophet (SAW) to publicly announce before the gathering of all tribes of Arabia on the occasion of the Pilgrimage that he and his Lord hereby declare immunity to all kinds of treaties that had been concluded with the idolaters. Further the Prophet (SAW) was asked to proclaim to the disbelievers that if they repented and mended their ways it would be better for them but if they turned away from the truth, then they should know that they cannot escape the punishment of Allah (SWT).

It should also be mentioned here that '*Hajj Al-Akbar*' as referred to here in this *ayah*, does not refer to the Pilgrimage that comes on Friday, rather the greater *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) means the day of *Arafah* and the smaller *Hajj* (*Hajj Al-Asghar*) means an *Umrah*.

(4) *"Except those of the idolaters with whom you have a treaty, and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfill their treaty to them to the*

end of their term. Surely Allah (SWT) loves the pious." This is an exception regarding those idolaters who had concluded a treaty with the Muslims for a fixed period of time. Allah (SWT) stated that if such idolaters honored their treaties sincerely and did not aid any one against the Muslims, then they should abide by the treaty till the end of its time, for surely Allah (SWT) loves those who are pious and keep their promises.

(5) *"Then when the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform regular prayers, and give (obligatory) charity, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah (SWT) is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* This refers to the third category of non-Muslims i.e. those with whom no treaty was concluded, and it also includes those who were given the four month grace period as mentioned earlier. Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims not to give any respite to the idolaters that as soon as the sacred months i.e. *Muharram, Rajab, Dhul-Qa'dah* and *Dhul-Hijjah*, have passed in which fighting has been prohibited, then do not give any respite to the idolaters and fight and slay them wherever you find them. And do not show any leniency and kindness to them, for showing mercy and appeasement at this time would be like showing cowardice. This has always been the practice of Allah (SWT) that once proof is established against a people they are not shown any mercy, for they do not deserve it. Further the Muslims are commanded to execute and imprison the disbelievers and not wait for them, rather attack them in their own areas and prepare for them ambush. But there is always room for repentance, thus Allah (SWT) said that if they repent, mend their ways and keep up their regular prayers and pay *Zakah* (obligatory charity), then they should be left alone, for they should know that Allah (SWT) is Forgiving and Merciful. This *ayah* was also used as a proof by Abu Bakr Siddique (RAA) against those who refused to pay *Zakah* after the death of the Prophet (SAW). He referred to this *ayah* and convinced other Companions (RAA) of the Prophet (SAW) to wage *Jihad* against those people. At first Umar (RAA) tried to insist over giving concession to the tribes who had rebelled, because of the impending danger, but as Abu Bakr (RAA) unfolded his arguments step by step, all the Companions (RAA) came round to the view that the truth was in what Abu Bakr (RAA) said.

(6) *“And if anyone of the idolaters seeks your protection then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah (SWT), and then escort him to where he can be secure, that is because they are men who know not.”* Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims that if any of the idolaters come to them and seek their protection, then they should grant them protection, so that they have an opportunity to listen to the *Qur’an* and understand the veracity of Islam. This was because there were some tribes in Arabia who had not known or heard enough about Islam and *Qur’an*, thus when they were given an ultimatum by Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) to embrace Islam or leave the Arabian peninsula, some of them came to the Muslims to actually learn about their religion and the message that they were preaching. Thus the Muslims were commanded to give them asylum and then transport them to a place of safety, for these are people who do not know the truth. Then after they have come to know the truth it would be incumbent on them to accept it or to leave Arabia. In this regard it seems appropriate to mention here the tribe of *Kafiristan* living in the northern areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has been reported that they claim to be the direct descendents of the *Quraysh* of *Makkah* that were exiled from the Arabian peninsula. However, Allah (SWT) knows the best.

(7) *“How can there be a covenant with Allah (SWT) and with His Messenger (SAW) for the idolaters except those with whom you made a covenant near the Sacred Mosque? So long as they are true to you, be true to them. Verily, Allah (SWT) loves the pious.”* These *ayah* from 7 to 24 were revealed before the conquest of *Makkah* as mentioned in the introduction. At that time when the Muslims were preparing for their final assault against the *Quraysh* of *Makkah*, a difference of opinion arose between on the question whether they fight against the *Quraysh* or not. Much of the debate was initiated by the hypocrites of *Madinah* who discouraged the Muslims from fighting against the *Quraysh*, for they said that the *Quraysh* were the custodians of *Makkah* and if they fight, they would be shedding blood in the Holy Sanctuary. Thus Allah (SWT) admonished them in this *ayah* and said that how can there be a treaty with the idolaters on part of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), for they will never abide by it as they have so much hatred in their hearts for the Muslims that if given the least opportunity, they will not

even bother to honor their pledge. Thus Allah (SWT) stated that there can never be a treaty with the idolaters except for those with whom the Muslims concluded a treaty at the Sacred Mosque i.e. the peace treaty of *Hudaibiyah*. Then He commanded the Muslims to honor this treaty as long as they uphold it, for He loves those who keep their promises.

(8) *“How that when you are overpowered by them, they regard not the ties, either of kinship or of covenant with you? With their mouths they please you, but their hearts are averse to you, and most of them are transgressors.”* Allah (SWT) further encourages the Muslims not to enter into any pledge with them for they should ponder over the fact that if these idolaters get the least opportunity to overpower them then they would never even blink before disregarding the ties of kinship with you or honor the treaty that they had made with you. They just try to flatter the Muslims with their speech but their hearts are filled with venom for most of them are rebellious and wicked in nature.

(9) *“They have purchased with the revelations of Allah (SWT) a little gain, and they hindered men from His Way; evil indeed is that which they used to do.”* i.e. they have rejected and cast aside the revelations of Allah (SWT) for the things of this world that have blinded them from the truth. Thus they have turned away from the path of Allah (SWT) and also prevent others from following it, and indeed evil are the deeds that they have done.

(10) *“With regard to a believer, they respect not the ties, either of kinship or of covenant! It is they who are the transgressors.”* i.e. they do not have any regard of the ties of kinship or the sanctity of their vows with the Muslims, for they are transgressors.

(11) *“But if they repent, perform regular prayers and give Zakah, then they are your brethren in religion. We explain the revelations in detail for a people who know.”* i.e. if they repent and turn to Allah (SWT) for forgiveness and offer their regular prayers and give *Zakah*, then it becomes obligatory for the Muslims that they accept their faith and consider them as their brothers in faith. Thus in this way Allah (SWT) explains His revelations for those who understand.

(12) *“But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and attack your Deen, then fight the leaders of disbelief, for surely their oaths are nothing to them - so that they may desist.”* Allah (SWT) commands the believers that if the disbelievers violate their oaths that they had made with the believers and insult their *Deen* i.e. taunt them for their faith, then they should fight the leaders of disbelief like Abu Jahl, Utbah and Shaybah, and execute them, for their oaths are nothing to them and they may be restrained from their evil actions.

(13) *“Will you not fight a people who have violated their oaths and intended to expel the Messenger (SWT), while they did attack you first? Do you fear them? Allah (SWT) has more right that you should fear Him, if you are believers.”* In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) admonishes the Muslims that why is it that they do not want to fight against the disbelievers, when it were the disbelievers who broke their oaths and conspired to expel Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from *Makkah*, and it was they who started fighting against the Muslims for the first time i.e. in the battle of *Badr*. Further, Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims not to fear the idolaters but fear Him alone, for He deserves more to be feared because of His Might and Power.

(14) *“Fight against them so that Allah (SWT) will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of believing people.”* Allah (SWT) further persuaded the believers to fight against the disbelievers and He gave them the good news of victory over these idolaters. Further, He said that He will punish the disbelievers at the hands of the Muslims and will sooth the hearts of the believers.

(15) *“And remove the anger of their hearts. Allah (SWT) accepts the repentance of whom He wills. Allah (SWT) is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”* i.e. Allah (SWT) will heal the spirits of the believers by removing anger from their hearts caused by all those pains and sorrows inflicted by the disbelievers, for surely He accepts repentance of whom He Wills of His servants. And He knows what is best for His servants and He is All-Wise and Knowing.

(16) *“Do you think that you shall be left alone while Allah (SWT) has not seen those among you who strive hard and have not taken any trusted friends besides Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), and the believers. Allah (SWT) is Well-Acquainted with what you do.”* This *ayah* emphasizes the fact that every believer will have to go through the trials and the tests of faith in order to attain victory in this world and in the Hereafter. Then Allah (SWT) said that the sincere Muslims will be marked out from the hypocrites by testing them through *Jihad* i.e. struggle in the path of Allah (SWT). They are those who do not make as their supporters and confidants other than Allah (SWT), His Messenger (SAW) and the believers. Thus it is a test for the believers and a warning for them, so that there does not remain any sympathy in their hearts for the disbelievers, even if they be their relatives. And certainly Allah (SWT) knows all that they do.

(17) *“It is not for the idolaters to inhabit the Mosques of Allah (SWT), while they are self-confessedly unbelievers. The works of such are in vain and in Fire shall they abide.”* This *ayah* refers to the *Quraysh* of *Makkah* who were the custodians of *Ka’bah* and were responsible for its maintenance. Allah (SWT) stated that it is not for those who associate partners with Him to tend and maintain the mosques of Allah (SWT), for they are built to worship Him alone while the idolaters do nothing but false acts of *Shirk* and *Kufr* in them. Thus Allah (SWT) said that all their works i.e. the maintenance and building of the *Ka’bah* etc. will go in vain because of their *Shirk* and their final abode will be Hellfire.

(18) *“The Mosques of Allah (SWT) shall be visited only by those who believe in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day; perform regular prayers, and give Zakah and fear none but Allah (SWT). It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.”* i.e. the maintaining of the mosques of Allah (SWT) can only be done by those who believe in Allah (SWT) and in the *Last Day*, establish regular prayers in them and pay their obligatory charity and they fear Him alone. Such are the believers who shall be rightly guided.

(19) *“Do you consider the providing of drinking water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of Sacred Mosque as worthy as the acts of those who believe in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, and strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allah (SWT)? They are not equal before Allah (SWT). And Allah (SWT) guides not those people who are the wrong-doers.”* The *Quraysh* of *Makkah* felt

proud of their status as the custodians of the *Sacred Mosque* and that they are its maintainers, but Allah (SWT) said that all these works will be of no good to them, for they can never be equal to those who believe in Him and the *Last Day* and strive in His cause. And surely Allah (SWT) does not guide such evil-doers.

(20) *“Those who believed and emigrated and strove hard and fought in Allah's Cause with their wealth and their lives are far higher in degree with Allah (SWT). They are the successful.”* i.e. those with such qualities are the ones who have the highest rank with Allah (SWT), for they believed in Him, left their homes and made *Jihad* for His cause with their wealth and their lives. Such are indeed the successful ones.

(21) *“Their Lord gives them glad tidings of a Mercy from Him, and that He is pleased, and of Gardens for them wherein are everlasting delights.”* Such are those who will receive the good news of a supreme achievement i.e. their Lord will bestow His Mercy upon them and will be pleased with them, and has prepared for them gardens of eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

(22) *“They will dwell therein forever. Verily, with Allah (SWT) is a great reward.”* i.e. they will dwell in Paradise forever and surely the supreme reward is only with Allah (SWT).