

Surah 42, ash Shura (Consultation), Mecca 53

The Quran's Text and Yusuf Ali's Translation

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا... ^{up}

42:36. Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this Life:

...وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

but that which is with God is better and more lasting: (it is) for those

- who believe and put their trust in their Lord;

[Ali's Comments: 4575. Any good (or ill) which is our lot is only a temporary phase to serve the convenience of this life. But there is a higher good, which comes from Allah's own Presence. Such good is both superior in quality, and more permanent. In the same way, any ills that we may suffer in this life, have reference only to the conditions of this our life of probation, The ills that we "earn" in our spiritual Life-such as deprivation of Allah's Grace-are far more momentous and permanent.

4576. The higher and more permanent gifts which come from Allah's Presence are for those who truly worship and serve Allah. These are described by nine of their characteristics: viz. 1. they have Faith: and it follows that 2. they trust in Allah, instead of running after false standards or values: 3. they eschew the more serious offences against

Allah's Law, and of course keep clear of any offences against sex (indecencies); 4. while knowing that they are not themselves perfect, they are ready to forgive others, even though they are sorely tried with anger and provocation; for the rest see n. 4578.]

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ ... ^{up}

42:37. - Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds,

... وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

- and, when they are angry even then forgive;

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ... ^{up}

42: 38. - Those who hearken to their Lord,

- and establish regular prayer;

... وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ...

- who (conduct) their affairs **by mutual Consultation**;

...وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

- who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ ^{up}

42: 39. - And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ... up

42:40. The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree):

... فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, His reward is due from Allah:

... إِنَّهَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠)

for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.

وَلَمَّا نَتَصَرَّ بِغَدْظٍ لِّمُهْجَاؤِ لَكُمْ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤١) up

42:41. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against **such** there is no cause of blame

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ظِلْمًا... up

42:42. The **blame is only against those** who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice:

...أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

for such there will be a Penalty grievous.

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤٣﴾

43. But indeed **if any show patience and forgive**, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.

[**Ali's comments:** 4577. Here we are speaking of the ordinary man or woman who tries to follow Allah's Law: he or she is not perfect, but at least eschews the major breaches of conduct. For those higher in spiritual degree there is of course a stricter standard. But all are entitled to the blessing of Islam, whatever their degree.

4578. Continuing the enumeration of the characteristics described in n. 4576 above, we have the following further qualities in those who wish to serve Allah. **5.** They are ready at all times to hearken to Allah's Signs, or to listen to the admonitions of prophets of Allah, and to follow the true Path, as they understand it; **6.** they keep personal contact with Allah, by habits of Prayer and Praise; **7.** their conduct in life is open and determined by mutual Consultation between those who are entitled to voice. e.g., in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household; in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested; and in State affairs, as between rulers and ruled, or as between different departments of administration, to preserve the unity of administration; **8.** they do not forget Charity, or the help due to their weaker brethren, out of the

wealth or gifts or talents or opportunities, which Allah has provided for themselves; and 9. when other people use them despitefully, they are not cowed down or terrorized into submission and acceptance of evil, but stand up for their rights within the limits mentioned in verse 40. (R).]

4579."Consultation." This is the key-word of the Surah, and suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a Personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah. See the points in head 7 under n. 4578 above. This principle was applied to its fullest extent by the holy Prophet in his private and public life, and was fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam. Modern representative government is an attempt, by no means perfect, to apply this principle in State affairs. See my Religious Polity of Islam.

4580. This follows from the high value attached to an individual soul's Personality in Islam. Cf. last note. There are four possible situations that may arise: an individual may have to stand up against an oppressor 1. for his own trampled rights, or 2. for the rights of others within his ken; or 3. a community may have similarly to stand up for its own rights collectively: or 4. for the rights of others. Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are considered highly meritorious for all, though few have the courage or the spirit to rise to so high a standard. No. 1 is specially liable to abuse on account of man's selfishness; Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are also abused by men pretending to motives of public good when they are serving their own personal interests or idiosyncrasies; hence the qualifications mentioned in the next four verses and the notes thereto.

4581. See last note. When you stand up for rights, either on private or public grounds, it may be through processes of law, or by way of private defense in so far as the law permits private action. But in all cases you must not seek a compensation greater than the injury suffered. The most you can do is to demand equal redress, i.e., a harm equivalent to the harm done to you. Even this may serve to curb your unregenerate soul, or a community bent on revenge. But the ideal mode is not to slake your thirst for vengeance, but to follow better ways leading to the reform of the offender or his reconciliation. See 41:34, and 23:96. You can take steps to prevent repetition, by physical or moral means; the best moral means would be to turn hatred into friendship by forgiveness and love. In that case the compensation or reward (if we must use such terms) is infinitely greater, for it wins the good pleasure of Allah. But this active righting of wrongs, whether by physical or by moral or spiritual means, which are commended as better, is an antithesis to the monkish doctrine, when you are smitten on one cheek, to turn the other also. This would not suppress, but encourage wrong-doing. It is practised by none but poltroons, and is preached only by hypocrites, or men who want to make slaves of others by depriving them of the power of self-defence. It occurs in two of the four canonical Gospels (Matt. 5:39, and Luke 6:29), but we need not therefore assume that it was preached by Jesus.

4582. To love Allah is the highest motive of our conduct, for it leads to the love of Allah's creatures; to win the approbation and love of Allah, is the highest reward, far transcending any compensation or satisfaction we can obtain in this life.

4583. Allah does not love those who do wrong. If, therefore we tolerate wrong, or encourage wrong by allowing it to run rampant when we can prevent it, we fail in our duty to Allah.

4584. Such people are not to be blamed, though they are following the lower law. The blame is on those who arrogantly ride roughshod over the land, oppressing people with grievous wrong. See next verse.

4585. The fact that men seek the lower rather than the higher Law is itself a result of arrogant wrong-doing of which the type was the Pharaoh who claimed to be "your Lord Most High" and oppressed the Israelites, and kept his own people under slavery and subjection, and the false glamour of magic and deception.

4586. It is harder to be patient and forgive, and yet to get wrongs righted, as was done by the holy Prophet, than to bluster about and "punish the guilty" or "teach them lessons". It may look like futility or lack of purpose, but in reality it is the highest and noblest form of courage and resolution. And it may carry out the purpose of reform and the suppression of evil even better than stem punishment.

The gentleness of innocence often "persuades where stronger measures fail." But of course circumstances alter cases, and there is some allowance also to be made for the personal equation of the men you have to deal with: in some cases severity may be called for, but it should be from a strict judicial motive, and not merely from personal anger or spite or any lower motive in disguise.]

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

42:36 AND [remember that] whatever you are given [now] is but for the [passing] enjoyment of life in this world - **whereas that which is with God is far better and more enduring.** **[It shall be given] to all who attain to faith and in their Sustainer place their trust;**

(42:37) and **who shun the more heinous sins and abominations;** and who, **whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive;**

(42:38) and who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and are constant in prayer; **and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves;** 38 and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance; 39

(42:39) **and who, whenever tyranny afflicts them, defend themselves.**

42:40 But [remember that an attempt at] requiting evil may, too, become an evil: 40 hence, whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with God - for, verily, He does not love evildoers."

(42:41) Yet indeed, as for any who defend themselves after having been wronged - no blame whatever attaches to them:

(42:42) blame attaches but to those who oppress [other] people and behave outrageously on earth, offending against all right: for them there is grievous suffering in store!

42:43 But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives - this, behold, is indeed something to set one's heart upon!"

[Asad's Comments: 38 This particular **qualification of true believers**- regarded by the Prophet's Companions as so important that they always referred to this surah by the key- word "consultation" (shara) - has a double import: firstly, it is meant to remind all followers of the Qur'an that they must remain united within one single community (ummah); and, secondly, **it lays down the principle that all their communal business must be transacted in mutual consultation.** (For the political implications of this principle, see State and Government, pp.44 ff).

39 See note 4 on 2:3. Following as it does immediately upon the call to communal unity and consultation, the "spending on others" bears here the general connotation of social justice.

40 Lit., "is [or "may be"] an evil like it". In other words, successful struggle against tyranny (which latter is the meaning of the noun baghy in the last sentence of the preceding verse) often tends to degenerate into a similarly tyrannical attitude towards the erstwhile oppressors, Hence, most of the classical commentators (e.g., Baghawi, Zamakhshari, Razi, Baydawi) stress the absolute prohibition of "going beyond what is right" (i'tida 1) when defending oneself against tyranny and oppression. (Cf the passage relating to fighting against "those who wage war again you" in 2:190 ff)

41 I.e., in this context, such as succumb to the temptation of indulging in undue acts of reveng against their former oppressors.

42 Cf. 41:34-35, as well as note 44 on 13:22. 43 See note 4 on 14:4.

44 Although this is primarily a reference to "those who oppress [other] people and behave outrageously on earth, offending against all right" (verse 42 above), the meaning of the term is general, applying to all kinds of deliberate evildoers.

45 I.e., a "second chance" on earth: cf. 6:27-28.]

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation:

42:36 Now whatever ye have been given is but a passing comfort for the life of the world, and that which Allah hath is better and more lasting for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

42:37 And those who shun the worst of sins and indecencies and, when they are wroth, forgive,

42:38 And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish worship, and whose affairs are a matter of counsel, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them,

42:39 And those who, when great wrong is done to them, defend themselves,

42:40 The guerdon of an ill deed is an ill the like thereof. But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of Allah. Lo! He loveth not wrong doers.

42:41 And whoso defendeth himself after he hath suffered wrong for such, there is no way (of blame) against them.

42:42 The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress mankind, and wrongfully rebel in the earth. For such there is a painful doom.

42:43 And verily whoso is patient and forgiveth, lo! that, verily, is (of) the steadfast heart of things.