

# Introduction to Surah At-Tawbah:

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed in the 9th year of Hijrah in three different discourses. The first discourse (Verses: 1-37) was revealed in the month of Dhul-Q'adah and set a new policy towards the Mushrikeen. The second discourse (Verses: 38-72) was revealed in the month of Rajab and dealt with the Campaign or battle of Tabuk. The third discourse (Verses: 73-129) was revealed upon the Prophet's (Pbuh) return from the Campaign of Tabuk. There are some pieces in this discourse that were sent down on different occasions during the same period and were afterwards consolidated by the Prophet into the Surah in accordance with the inspiration from Allah.

### Major Issues, Divine Law, and Guidance

- Allah's Policy towards the Mushrikeen.
- Commandments relating to participation in Jihad.
- Regulations relating to hypocrisy (Munafikeen), weak faith, and negligence.
- Campaign of Tabuk.
- Establishment of a Dar-ul-Islam (an Islamic state).
- Extending the influence of Islam to adjoining countries.
- Crushing the mischief of the hypocrites (Munafikeen).
- Preparing the Muslims for a struggle in the cause of Islam.

### Theme

Now that the administration of the whole of Arabia had come into the hands of the believers, and all the opposing powers had become helpless, it was necessary to make a clear declaration of the policy which was to be adopted to make this newly formed Islamic state a perfect Dar-ul-Islam. In order to accomplish this objective, the following measures were taken:

- A declaration was made that all the treaties (especially that of Hudaibiya) with the mushrikeen were abolished and the Muslims would be released from the treaty obligations

with them after the expiration of four months' notice. On the occasion of Hajj, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) despatched Hadrat Ali to follow Hadrat Abu Bakr, who had already left for Makkah as leader of the Pilgrims to the Kaabah. He instructed Hadrat Ali to deliver the discourse before the representatives of the different clans of Arabia so as to inform them of the new policy towards the Mushriks of Quraysh.

- A decree was issued that the guardianship of the Ka'bah should be taken away from the mushriken and placed permanently in the hands of the believers (vv. 12-18), that all the customs and practices relating to the era of "ignorance" should be abolished, and that the mushriken should not be allowed in the vicinity of the Ka'bah (v. 28). A decree was issued to crush the non-Muslim powers and force them to accept the sovereignty of the Islamic State. The object of Jihad was not to coerce them to accept Islam, as they were free to accept or not accept it. The object was to allow them the freedom to remain misguided, if they chose to be so, provided that they paid Jizya, the protection tax (v. 29), as a sign of their subjugation to the Islamic State.
- To ensure the stability of the Islamic State, gangs of the hypocrites who were being tolerated in spite of their flagrant crimes, were crushed. The Muslims were enjoined to treat them openly as disbelievers (v. 73). Accordingly, the Prophet set on fire the house of Swailim, where the hypocrites used to gather for consultations in order to dissuade the people from joining the expedition of Tabuk. When the Prophet returned from Tabuk, he ordered pulled down and burned, the "masjid," which was being used by the hypocrites as a place for hatching plots against the true believers.
- Those people who lagged behind in the Campaign of Tabuk or showed the least negligence, were severely taken to task if they had no plausible excuse for not fulfilling that obligation. For there could be no greater internal danger to the Islamic community than weakness of faith, especially on the eve of a conflict with the whole non-Muslim world.
- A declaration was made that in the future, the sole criterion of an individual's true faith would be the exertion that individuals make for spreading the Word of Allah and the role they play in the conflict between Islam and Kufr. Therefore, if anyone shows any hesitation in sacrificing his life, money, time, and energies, his faith shall not be regarded as genuine. (vv. 81-96)

### **Subject matter of Surah At-Tawbah**

This Surah is based around the Battle/campaign of Tabuk: The preparation for this campaign and the issues that arose upon the return from there are discussed. Moreover, the main discussion is on the concept of Jihad and how Allah incites the Muslims to do Jihad in order to establish Allah's TAWHEED. Allah shows us the characters of the Hypocrites (Munafikeen) as they came to surface after the proclamation of Jihad as this is a very difficult task for those who say they are Muslims (believers) with their mouths but their actions show otherwise with no real faith in their hearts.

This Surah is known by two names AT-TAUBAH and AL-BARA'AT. It is called AT-TAUBAH because it enunciates the nature of Tawbah (repentance) and mentions the conditions of its acceptance. (Verses: 102. 118). The second name BARA' AT (Release or discharge from all obligation) is taken from the first word of the Surah.

This is the only Surah of the Quran to which Bismillah is not prefixed. Though the commentators have given different reasons for this, the correct one which has been given by Imam Razi: namely, this is because the Holy Prophet himself did not dictate it at the beginning of the Surah. Therefore, the Companions did not prefix it and their successors followed them. This is a further proof of the fact that utmost care has been taken to keep the Quran intact so that it should remain in its complete and original form.

### **NUZUL (Order)**

Order of revelation: This is a Madani Surah consisting of 129 Verses, its 113<sup>th</sup> in order of revelation (Nuzul) coming after Surah Al-Maidah, but 9<sup>th</sup> (after Surah Al-Anfal) in order of the book (Quran) as placed by PBUH.

### **RABAT (Connection)**

This Surah's connection or (Rabat) with previous Surah are as follows:

- The previous Surah 'Al-Anfal' had guidelines (cavaneen/kaida) of Jihad/Kitaal and Allah enticed the Momins (true Muslims) to hasten towards it (Jihad) it was more of a general call to Jihad. However, in this Surah, Allah gives further instructions on Jihad in further detail and discusses how when the call for Jihad is made, you will see how the true Muslims (Momin) will hasten towards it and how the Hypocrites (Munafikeen) will make excuses and be lazy to do it and also put others off from going for Jihad.
- Surah Al-Anfal discussed (bayaan) of Jihad saying 'Kitaal feesabilillah' (physically fight with them in the way of your Lord). Whereas in this Surah Allah is telling us and discussing whom to fight with (mushriks/ahle kitab jews & Christians) and which different groups will arise. So, there isn't only the external battle, there is also an internal battle (with the Hypocrites).
- Surah Al-Anfal discussed how to make 'Islah' (reform) with each other, how to bury the hatchet and create unity within yourselves or your community/society so that you can work together and further your cause of Islam. Whereas in this Surah Allah is telling the Muslims and discussing whom to keep away from and separate yourselves from, for example the Kaafir (Disbelievers, Mushrikeen and Munafikeen).
- In Surah Al-Anfal in Verse 60 Allah discusses how to prepare yourselves for battle (Jihad), enticing the Muslims for this cause. Whereas in this Surah Allah is warning & threatening those who don't prepare for Jihad or don't want to go.
- Surah Al-Anfal discussed the incidents around the battle of Badr. Whereas this Surah Allah discusses the battle of Hunain and Tabuk.
- Surah Al-Anfal in Verse: 60 discussed 'Nafi Ilm-ul-Ghaib' (No one has knowledge of the unseen other than Allah/Only Allah has Ilm-ul-ghaib). Whereas in this Surah Allah is discussing 'Nafi Il-ul-ghaib regarding the PBUH, that even the PBUH doesn't have Ilm-ul-ghaib.

- In Surah Al-Anfal Allah said 'Fight them until shirk is no more'. Whereas in this Surah Allah outlines in detail the characters of those who are munkar-e-Jihad (reject Jihad); The Munafikeen (hypocrites).

### **MUMTAZ (Importance/Excellence)**

The Mumtaz or importance and Excellence of this surah are many, such as:

- It discusses in detail 'Firqi'ah Arba'ah': Description (bayaan) of 4 groups;
  - 1) Mushrikeen (those who do shirk),
  - 2) Munafikeen (Hypocrites),
  - 3) Ahle kitab (People of the book; Jews & Christian's)
  - 4) Momineen (True Muslims)
- Allah gives details of the Mushrikeen (those who do shirk), and how there are different types of Mushriks (their takseem).
- Allah orders the Momin (true Muslim) to stay/keep away from the Mushrikeen (Shirk).
- Allah advises the Muslims that they shouldn't allow the Mushriks to make their masajid (places of worship) in or around the vicinity of Dar-ul-Islam.
- Allah discusses in detail the characteristics of the Munafikeen (Hypocrites).
- Allah discusses the battle of Hunain in this Surah.
- Allah discusses the incident of Ghar-e-Thowr (Mount Thowr).
- Allah discusses the incident of Masjid-e-Daraar (The hypocrites mosque of Daraar), no other Surah discusses this.
- This Surah discusses the distribution of Sadakah (spending in Allah's way for the poor).
- Allah entices the Momin (true Muslim) to do Jihad again & again.
- Allah discusses Hajj-e-Akbar (The great Hajj).

### **MAQSAD (Purpose)**

The purpose or Dawah of this Surah is '**Jihad/Kitaal Feesabilillah**' (Jihad in the way of Allah/for Allah's pleasure/sake). Allah instigates the Muslims to do Jihad/Kitaal (battle/fight).

The types of Jihad are discussed and with whom to do Jihad with. The PBUH was faced with different groups of disbelievers (Kafir's) such as; Mushriks (those who commit Shirk), Munafiks (Hypocrites), Ahle Kitaab (People of the book; Jews & Christians). The Muslims were ordered to keep well away and separate themselves from these groups of Disbelievers and thus were told by Allah how to distinguish between them by showing their characters so Muslims can recognise them and their trickery.

## **KHULASA (Summary)**

This Surah is divided into 4 sections:

1<sup>st</sup> section is from Verse 1-28

2<sup>nd</sup> section is from Verse 29-37

3<sup>rd</sup> section is from Verse 38-110

4<sup>th</sup> section is from Verse 111-129 (last Verse).

The Surah has been divided into 4 sections because of the fact that 4 groups of people are being discussed; Allah's orders (Hukum's) for them and a discussion of their characters:

1<sup>st</sup> section discusses: Mushrikeen (Verse 1-28)

2<sup>nd</sup> section discusses: Ahle Kitab (Verse 29-37)

3<sup>rd</sup> section discusses: Munafikeen (Verse 38-110)

4<sup>th</sup> section discusses: Momineen (Verse 111-129)

These above 4 groups have been divided and discussed separately in order to recognise each groups traits and characters. This is to establish what type of people the PBUH and Sahabah are dealing with (which kind of people you are dealing) & to which group they belong to. Allah is giving the PBUH a head start (or the Muslims a head start) to recognise different groups of people, their traits, their characters in order to deal with them in that way.

## **Section 1:**

### **Mushrikeen (Verse 1-28)**

The Mushrikeen have been divided into 3 groups:

- 1) The 'Muharibeen'; Those who are fighting you in battle (jang karne wale).
- 2) Those who have a treaty (promise) in place with you of 'NO' war but don't have a time limit set of the treaty.
- 3) Those who have a treaty (promise) in place with you of 'NO' war but do have a time limit set that this treaty is up until this certain date and will expire thereafter.

Straight away in Verse 1 Allah is telling (order/hukum) the Muslims to discharge themselves from all obligations of treaties they have with the Musrikeen (polytheists).

In Verse 3 Allah tells the Momineen (true Muslims) to free themselves from the Mushrikeen 'A declaration from Allah and His Messenger is made to all people on the day of the greater pilgrimage (Hajj-e-Akbar) that Allah and His Messenger are free of the polytheists (Verse 3).

- Allah in Verse 4 orders (a Hukum to) the Momin (true Muslims) to honour the treaties they have with the Mushrikeen if they have not supported an enemy against you and have honoured their treaty with you. As well as this Allah says honour your treaty with them until

the time limit is expired of the treaty, but when the time is up you need to fight them (Jihad/Kitaal) until shirk is no more (until the Aqeeda of Shirk has been destroyed).

- Allah in Verse 5 orders (a Hukum to) the Momin (true Muslims) to fight Jihad/Kitaal (physical battle) with those who have a treaty but they disturb your religion with their tricks and violate the treaty they have with you.
- In these Verses of section 1 (Verses 1-28) Allah is ordering enticing & instigating the Momineen/Muslims to physically fight (Jihad/Kitaal) with the Mushrikeen (polytheists). Allah is saying 'Hasten to fight with them until Shirk is no more and destroyed'.

## **Section 2:**

### **Ahle Kitab (Jews & Christians) (Verse 29-37)**

In this section Allah discusses the Ahle Kitab and their a'amal (doings), their Aqeeda and their characters. Allah has discussed & divided the Ahle Kitab into 2 groups:

- 1) Yahood (Jews)
  - 2) Nasaara (Christians)
- Allah in these 6 verses has discussed how the Momin should tackle these 2 groups in the way of Jihad/Kitaal.
  - In Verse 33 there is a discussion (bayaan) in which Allah is saying that Muhammad (PBUH) is true messenger on true guidance from his lord bringing the true religion of Islam to promote Allah's Tawheed. Once again (again & again throughout the holy Quran) promoting Sadakat al Rasool (truthfulness of the Prophet) & Sadakat al Kitab (truthfulness of the book) 'Making it prevail over all other books and guidance'. Why? Because they rejected him as the last and final Messenger even though they told of his arrival in their scriptures. Otherwise what were these tribes of Jews (Banu Nadhir, Banu Qurayza, Banu Qaynuqa) doing in Madina at that time? And why did they emigrate a few hundred years from Palestine to Madina which was known as pagan Arabia?
  - Then in Verses 34 & 35 Allah has given a summary of these 2 groups of Ahle Kitab, and Allah advises the believers (Muslims) of their characters and what they do and what will happen to them in the hereafter.

## **Section 3:**

### **Munafikeen (Hypocrites) (Verse 38-110)**

In this section there is a discussion (Bayaan) related to the Munafikeen (Hypocrites amongst the Muslim), their bad characters and trickery. Of which 63 characteristics are mentioned throughout these verses. So, therefore you will recognise the hypocrites through these 63 bad characters of theirs. Then Allah gives them warnings and admonishes (Zajr & Daant) them because they don't want to do

Jihad in Allah's way or are lazy, make excuses or prefer the worldly benefits over Jihad and Allah's Tawheed. Thus, Allah warns them with the Hellfire in the hereafter.

#### **Section 4:**

##### **Momineen (True Muslims) (Verse 111-129)**

Here in these Verses Allah is discussing (bayaan) the Momineen (true Muslim/believer) and has divided them into 3 groups:

- 1) Mujahid (the fighter/fighting for Allah's cause)
- 2) Mutakasileen (those who quickly make Tawbah and repent to Allah for their shortcomings)
- 3) Muazzireen (those who have an' Uzr' meaning a valid excuse, apology, pardon or pleas for not fighting Jihad in Allah's cause). This could be feebleness of old age or those underage etc.

Allah gives an order (Hukum) for each of these 3 groups of Momins (true believers) in these verses and reassures them and gives them the glad tidings of gardens in paradise for eternity so long as they repent and have Taqwah in Allah.

#### **Summary of Verses**

- Allah orders to Do Jihad (physically fight/kital/kill) the Mushriks when they break (violate) or go against their treaties with you: (Verse: 5)
- Allah says do Jihad (fight/kital) with those who disbelieve: (Verse: 29)
- Dawah Tawheed (propagation of Tawheed). Allah is calling to his Tawheed/Oneness: (Verses: 31, 116, 129).
- Targheeb (Allah prompts/instigates) the Mujahid to fight in 18 places: (Verses: Twice in verse 3, 12, 16, 20, 25, 36, 40, 41, 44, 73, 88, 111, 117, 119, 120, 123).
- Targheeb (Allah prompts/instigates) the Mujahid to fight and sets out the reasons (asbab) for the Jihad in 14 places: (Verses: 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34).
- Bad qualities/characteristics of Ahle Kitab:
  - 1) Verse 29: They don't make Haram that which Allah has made Haram (make Halal & Haram up themselves, the Jews were known for changing Allah's verses and selling them for petty gains)
  - 2) Verse 30: The Ahle Kitab Associate partners with Allah (doing Shirk and reject Allah's Tawheed).
  - 3) Verse 31: They have taken their elders (Rabbis, Monks, saints, spiritual leaders) as their Lord (Ilah). Using these deities to make shirk with Allah.

- 4) Verse 32: They wish to get rid of Allah's Noor (this Quran) and his everlasting system of Islam.
- 5) Verse 34: They (these Rabbis/Monks) consume (eat) people's wealth unjustly and with deceit. And hinder people from the path of Allah.
- 6) Verse 34: They hoard (hold on to) their wealth and don't want to spend it in Allah's way (cause).

- Boycott of Disbelievers (Kafir) in 4 places: (Verses: 3, 23, 24, 28)

- Takhweef, Allah is (intimidating, terrifying, threatening) the Mushrikeen in 30 places: (Verses: 127, 19, 23, 24, 26, 30, 34, 37, 45, 49, 61, 63, 67, 74, 79, 80, 84, 85, 90, 93, 95, 96, 98, 101, 107, 109, 113, 125, 126, 127).

- Zajar, Allah is (scolding) those Munafikeen in 15 places who are lazy, timid and make lame excuses for Jihad (fighting in Allah's cause): (Verses: 15, 38, 39, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 81, 82, 86, 87, 90, 91).

- Zajar, Allah is (scolding) those who are stingy and don't spend in Allah's way/cause in Verses: 76, 79, and 98.

### **Summary of Surah**

- 63 bad qualities or bad characters of the Munafikeen are mentioned in detail in this Surah.

- Allah discusses the 4 groups of people: Mushrikeen (those who do Shirk), Ahle Kitaab (people of the book Jews & Christians), Munafikeen (hypocrites), and Momineen (true Muslims).

- There is a lengthy discussion on the Mushrikeen, they are mentioned first in section 1 of the Surah starting from Verse 1. Their bad characters and bad qualities are detailed; related to Jihad Allah tells us there are some Mushriks you fight outright because of their breaking/violating treaties with you. There are some you don't fight if they have a treaty with you and they abide by the treaty. And there are some you don't fight until a prescribed time of the treaty with them. Allah orders the Muslims to tell the Mushrikeen on the day of Hajj (broadcast it to them) that they have 4 months from this time (give them a time limit), that if they accept Islam then well and good but if they reject then do Jihad (Kital/fight them until SHIRK is no more). There is no Aman (peace for those who insult you and your Deen and violate the treaty with you).

- There is Targheeb (Allah prompts/instigates) the Mujahid to fight (Jihad/Kitaal) in Allah's way; 'Targheeb-al-Kitaal'. And those who have Takabbur & fakhar (arrogance) their deeds will be of no use (wasted).

- Allah incites, instigates and pushes the Believers to support the PBUH in this Jihad (fighting/Kitaal) and only then will Allah send his 'Nusrah' of angles (his help) and victory like in the battle of Badr & Hunain. (Verse 25 & 26)

- The Momins (true Muslims) are given heed and warning by Allah not keep friendships with the disbelievers (Kaafirs) as they will never want good for you.



- Verse 29: starts with قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ 'Fakatilluadhina': This is the Dawah (Purpose) of the Surah. This starts section 2 of the Surah and Allah, in these verses mentions the opposing second group of people; Ahle Kitab (people of the book Jews and Christians) and continues upto verse 35 discussing their bad characters'/bad qualities.

- Verse 38 starts the mention of the Munafikeen (hypocrites) and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> section of this Surah where Allah discusses the bad characters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of people and Allah warns and scolds them for their Bukhl (Miserliness in Jihad).

- From Verse 99 to the end verse Allah is discussing the 4<sup>th</sup> group of people The Momins (true Muslims) and is the 4<sup>th</sup> section of the Surah. Allah discusses the Momineen and their good character and qualities; they are Mujahideen, there maybe lazy ones amongst them but they quickly realise and for Allah's forgiveness and repent. In these verses Allah compares the Momin to the Munafik and points out the Munafiks (who didn't want to fight Jihad) bad qualities too.

- Towards the end of the Surah Allah outlines 2 types of Jihad;

- 1) Jihad with the disbelievers (Kafir) whether they are Musrikeen or Ahle Kitab.
- 2) Jihad with the Munafikeen (Hypocrites who say they are Muslim with their mouths but have no belief in their hearts.

- The Surah ends in Verse 129 with Allah's TAWHEED which is the main purpose of this Surah. say, O Prophet, "Allah is sufficient for me. There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him. In Him I put my trust. And He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne."

And Allah knows best.