

CHAPTER 83, AL-MUTAFFIFIN (THOSE WHO DEAL IN FRAUD)

Rating:

Description: A short chapter that threatens those who are unscrupulous and offers consolation to those who strive for righteousness.

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Introduction

This thirty-six verse chapter is towards the end of the Quran where the chapters are short and were predominantly revealed in Mecca. At the beginning, when the Muslim community was small in number and suffered terribly at the hands of the Meccan elite, the chapters and verses served to strengthen the hearts and minds of the new Muslims. Chapter 83 addresses the conditions in Mecca at the time. It threatens those who deal in fraud with a severe punishment in the Hereafter and contrasts that punishment with the delights that await the righteous.

This chapter can be divided into four distinct parts. The first part addresses those who deal in fraud and reminds them that they will stand before God. The second part establishes their guilt and aggression. The third part describes the rewards the righteous should anticipate, and in the final part the believers are consoled and the disbelievers warned. The name of the chapter is taken from the first verse.

Verses 1- 6 Morality is a part of faith

Woe to those who deal in fraud, the ones who give short measure. The word woe implies both destruction and ruin. When they take from others they take full measure, but they have no problem defrauding others. The next verses express astonishment that some people think that they will never be brought to account for their actions. There will indeed be a Day when they will rise up to stand before their Lord and face all the consequences of their actions.

Meccan chapters usually focus on the fundamentals of the faith; thus the fact that corrupt business practices is mentioned here are an important consideration. It highlights the emphasis Islam gives to having good ethics and its uncompromising stand against injustice.

Verses 7 – 17 Recording the deeds of the wicked

A list of the wicked is already in a register. It is a written record of who will be in the lowest depths of Hell. And on the Day of Resurrection, ruin and destruction will belong to the deniers of that Day. It is only the sinful transgressors that deny it - their hearts are stained by their sinful actions. When they hear the revelations, they call them tales from ancient people. They will not be able to see God in the Afterlife. This separation from God is the most agonizing of all punishments. They will enter the Hellfire and feel the fire and be told that they are now experiencing the thing they used to deny.

Verses 18 – 28 A record of righteousness

By contrast, the record of the righteous is in a register of the exalted ones. It is a clearly written list, attested to by the angels. The righteous will be in a state of bliss, reclining on soft, comfortable couches, looking all around and recognizing the signs of pleasure in each other's faces. Their thirst will be quenched with a nectar that is delicious but does not intoxicate. Its lingering odor is musk. Those who wish to compete should compete in righteousness so that they may be rewarded. A person's life on earth is limited while life in the Hereafter is unlimited. Now is the time to compete and push each other to good deeds. The reward will be full of bliss including this wonderful drink that is mixed with the water of Tasnim, the highest spring in Paradise and the most favored drink of its inhabitants. Only those bought near to God will drink from this spring.

Verses 29 – 36 The believers are consoled and the disbelievers warned

During their life in this world, those who committed the crimes used to laugh at the believers. They would wink at one another and exchange derisive glances as they passed them on the roads. When they returned to their own people, they would joke about the believers. However, on the Day of Resurrection, it will be the believers laughing at the unbelievers. The believers will recline on their couches and gaze at the unbelievers saying that now they have certainly been repaid for what they used to do.

Conclusion

At the time in Mecca, the Muslims were facing a sustained and demoralizing onslaught. Thus in this chapter, God comforts them and urges them on to greater deeds and greater rewards. The believers suffer now, but in the Hereafter the outcome will be very different. God makes ironic remarks about the disbelievers, but even if they hear the revelation, they are insensitive to the remarks that are clearly meant for them. The hearts of the believers are more sensitive and pick up on the nuances contained in God's words. Even though they are being given a chance to change their ways, the disbelievers prefer to make jokes and encourage one another to more wickedness.

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