

Surah al-Taghabun (64)

'Mutual Cheating'

سورة التغابن

The surah derives its name from the word *taghabun*, denoting two parties' cheating each other, or exchanging each other's places (in paradise and in the Fire) that occurs in ayah 10. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. While Surah al-Munafiqun concluded with the command to obey and the call not to disobey, this surah opens by considering the obedient and the disobedient.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah... We begin by the name of Allah in whom are gathered all the qualities of perfection. Is there any more worthy of our beginning in his name, than He who is the First and the Last, who was before all things and then made all things exist?

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who is merciful towards all things. Mercy in the human being is a condition of the heart; in Him, glory be to Him, it means the actions that are based on mercy – His grace and His favouring – for in Him, glory be to Him, there is no place such as a heart for such qualities.

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah. His is the kingdom and His is the praise; and He is over all things powerful. (1)

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ
الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah ... 'Is glorifying' is given for *yusabbihū*. It seems that the variance between past and present tenses in these ayah is to highlight the actual glorifying in the former, and the fact that it is presently happening and is continuing to happen, in the latter. Allah, glorified is He, is glorified and declared free of any fault or imperfection by everything in the skies and the earth, as well as the skies and the earth themselves.

... His is the kingdom ... For He is the absolute, and the real dominant and king, while other kings are relative and have limited kingdom and dominion. Because he has no real dominance, any individual who has anything (be it power, dominance, kingdom, etc.) he is given it by Allah, glory be to Him.

... and His is the praise; ... All praises return to Him; for praise is only for something beautiful done by choice – and the originator of all beauties is Allah, glory be to Him. As for the praise of any other being, such praise is conditional and relative.

... and He is over all things powerful. He is powerful enough to begin all things and to conclude them, and to do with them as and how He wills.

(It is) He who created ye; so among ye is a disbeliever, and among ye is a believer. And Allah of what ye do is an observer. (2)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنْكُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

He it is who created ye; ... Allah it was who created mankind.

... so among ye is a disbeliever, and among ye is a believer ... Some of us disbelieve in Him through an evil choice after the clarity of the proofs and the manifestation of the convincing arguments. And some of us believe in Allah and in what the Messengers brought. Classifying mankind into two divisions in this way is to explain that disbelief is improper considering that the dominion and the creation is His, glory be to Him, and that all of existence glorifies His magnificence.

... And Allah of what ye do is an observer. He sees all that man does, and will recompense him for all that he does.

He created the skies and the earth in truth; and He fashioned ye and beautified your forms; and unto Him is the final Return. (3)

خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ
وَالِيهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

He created the skies and the earth by the truth; ... The creation is not a frivolity or a diversion like the games of children. Rather, the creation was for a purpose and an end and in accordance to wisdom.

... **and He fashioned ye...** He has given each of us an outer form or shape, being our senses and our physical dimensions, and an inner form, being our reason and our sensibilities.

... **and made splendid your forms; ...** This is a generalization, not taking into account those individual cases whose forms are not splendid.

... **and to Him is the final return.** That is, all of us are travelling towards His reckoning and His requitals after death, or on the resurrection day.

He knows what is in the skies and the earth; and He knows what ye conceal and what ye manifest; and Allah is knowing of what is in the breasts. (4)

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْرُونَ وَمَا
تُعْلِنُونَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤﴾

He knows what is in the skies and the earth; ... He knows everything that comes into existence and everything that ceases to exist, what happens to everything and how it happens.

... **and He knows what ye conceal and what ye manifest; ...** It means the actions done in secret, and the actions done openly in the presence of others. It is possible that 'what ye conceal' includes both secret actions and the things that take place in the breasts.

... **and Allah is knowing of what is in the breasts.** It means what takes place in the human heart.

The *ayaat* having dealt with divinity, the theme now turns to warn the disbelievers who turn away from Allah and from faith in Him, in His word:

Has there not come to ye the account of those who disbelieved beforehand? They tasted the mischief of their affair, and theirs is a painful chastisement. (5)

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبُؤُا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ فَدَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ
وَهُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

Has there not come to ye the account of those who disbelieved beforehand? ... Communities of disbelievers prior to those who opposed the Messenger turned away from faith and were chastised by Allah on that account.

... **They tasted the mischief of their affair, ...** They tasted the evil consequences of their disbelief and belying.

... **and theirs is a painful chastisement.** They tasted chastisement in the world, while in the hereafter a painful chastisement is theirs.

That is because their Messengers used to come to them with the clarifications, but they would say, 'Is it for a human being to guide us?' So they disbelieved and turned away while Allah is needless. And Allah is free of want, lauded. (6)

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرٌ
يَهْدُونَنَا فَكَفَرُوا وَتَوَلَّوْا ۗ وَاسْتَغْنَى اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٦﴾

That is because there came to them their Messengers with the clarifications, so they said, 'Is it for a human being to guide us?' So they disbelieved and turned away ... The chastisement that gripped them was because Messengers came to them from Allah, with clear proofs and decisive arguments and miracles, but they rejected them, objecting that they did not think it possible that the human species itself would be used to guide other humans. So they disbelieved in the Messengers and what they brought, and turned away from acceptance of the truth.

... **while Allah was needless** ... It means that He did the action of one needless of them, which was to leave them to themselves. Until then He had sought their guidance and rectitude, but they had not accepted. So the term that 'Allah was needless', or that 'He acted as one needless', is a case of likening the non-sensory to the sensory. And because the phrase could give the impression that Allah was in need of them before that, His speech continues:

... **And Allah is free of want**, ... He is rich in His essence, needing no thing and no person.

... **lauded**. He is praised by His own actions and is in no need of any other praise; and nor does the failure of any to praise Him detract from His being praised at the level of His essence (*mahmudun bidhdhat*).

Those who turn away from faith in Allah and His Messengers, turn away in a similar way from faith in the resurrection:

Those who disbelieve assume that they will never be raised. Say: 'Nay, by my Lord, indeed ye shall be raised, and then indeed ye shall be informed of what ye did. And that for Allah is easy.' (7)

زَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُبْعَثُوا قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ وَذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧﴾

Those who disbelieve assume that they will never be raised ... Their denials of an afterlife and of their being revived for the reckoning and the requitals are not rooted in certainty, but in assumption and conjecture.

... **Say: 'Nay, by my Lord, indeed ye shall be raised**, ... The Messenger was to tell them 'Nay, the matter is not as ye suppose, for by Allah, my Lord, ye shall certainly be raised and brought to life after your deaths, and then ye shall certainly be informed – by Allah, the angels and the Prophets and whoever else assists in the reckoning (*al-h/sab*) and the 'informing' or 'presentation of accounts' (*al-ikhba*) – of what ye did.'

... **and then indeed ye shall be informed of what ye did** ... Those guilty of disbelief and disobedience will be informed of their deeds before being punished for them.

... **And that for Allah is easy.**' Restoring the dead to life, and informing them of their deeds, is in no way difficult for Allah. He who originally created the creation is powerful enough to restore it, glory be to Him.

So believe in Allah and His Messenger and the light We have sent down; and Allah of what ye do is informed. (8)

فَقَامُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

So believe in Allah and His Messenger... As the raising of the dead and the reckoning and the recompense are all true, it is for all mankind to accept the belief in Allah and His Messenger, by submitting to them and obeying their commands.

... **and the light We have sent down;** ... It means the Qur'an, which illuminates the dark path of life so that man is able to see his way to felicity and salvation. Clearly, the Imams, peace be upon them, are among the embodiments of this light, as is recorded.

... **and Allah of what ye do is informed.** He is knowing and informed; so, when ye believe, He will recompense ye with wages and rewards, and your faith will not be wasted.

The raising of the dead and the requitals shall all be upon:

The day He gathers ye for the day of the gathering – that is the day of mutual cheating! And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously – He annuls his evils and enters him

يَوْمَ تَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُكْفِرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ

into gardens, rivers flowing under them; eternal in them, forever. That is the magnificent achievement. (9)

مَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ
الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

The day He gathers ye for the day of the gathering... The Day of Resurrection is called 'the day of the gathering' (*yawm al-jam'*) on account of how upon that day all of Allah's creatures will be gathered for the reckoning.

... **that is the day of mutual cheating!**... 'Mutual cheating' is given for *taghabun*. It means that the companions of the gardens will cheat the companions of the fire by taking their places in the garden – for every person has a place in the garden and a place in the fire – and vice versa: the companions of the fire will cheat the companions of the garden of their places in the fire. It is termed 'cheating' for both parties in a way similar to the *ayah*: 'So whose aggresses against ye, aggress against him the like of his aggression against ye.'

... **And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously...** When a person believes in Allah and considers Him to be free of what is unworthy of Him, and acts according to that belief,

... **He annuls his evils...** Allah annuls whatever sins and disobedience he has previously been guilty of, and wipes them from his record.

... **and enters him into gardens, rivers flowing under them; eternal in them, forever ...** Such fortunate persons are placed by Allah in the gardens of paradise, under the palaces and trees of which flow rivers of honey, wine, milk and sweet water. Once there those persons are eternal and they stay there forever, without end.

... **That is the magnificent achievement.** Their being eternal in the gardens of paradise is the successful achievement, over and above which there is no greater achievement and no greater happiness.

And those who disbelieve and belie Our signs – those are the companions of the fire, eternal in it, and atrocious is the destination! (10)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٠﴾

And those who disbelieve and belie Our signs – those are the companions of the fire, ... By contrast, those who reject belief in Allah and in His Messenger and say that Allah's proofs and arguments are false, will be forever in the fire. They are its 'companions' (*ashhab*) in the sense that they are constantly linked to it, all the while they are:

... **eternal in it, ...** They remain their forever.

... **and atrocious is the destination!** The fire is the worst place to take for a home.

As He has summoned to faith, glory be to Him, He now explains some of the benefits of faith that come to a person while in this world, before the achievement of the gardens in the hereafter. This is preceded by a prelude, in His word:

No affliction afflicts but with the permission of Allah; and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. And Allah is of all things knowing. (11)

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ
قَلْبَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

No affliction afflicts but with the permission of Allah... No affliction troubles a person nor does he find himself in any difficulty, save with the permission of Allah, glory be to Him. Indeed, it is He who determines all things and were it not for His determining things then nothing would happen in creation. Allah, glory be to Him, is able to annul all catastrophes so that they do not afflict anyone, but He determines that they afflict a person so as to test and examine him. This does not mean that evil works are brought about by Allah, glory be to Him, simply that He does not prevent their happening. So whoever is killed wrongly and wrongfully – by the permission of Allah, in the sense that He did not prevent the murderer in some existential way, like making the

murderer's hand wither so that he was unable to kill anyone – He permits this and lets the murderer do his deed because the world is the place of examination and trial. And if Allah, glory be to Him, compelled that there be no ugly deeds, then man would be like the rocks and lifeless matter in being compelled, and the rewards and punishments would be in vain.

Now, after this explanatory preamble, the theme presents the fruit of faith, in His word:

... **and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart ...** When a person believes in Allah with a correct and deep faith, Allah guides his heart until he is confident that whatever afflicts him is with the knowledge of Allah, and that He will recompense him with wage and rewards for what has afflicted him. And when a person knows that whatever harm befalls him will lead to an increase in his own good, his heart becomes confident and afflictions hardly trouble him.

... **And Allah is of all things knowing.** He recompenses every person for what they have done.

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger; and if ye turn away, then indeed, upon Our Messenger is only the clear conveyance. (12)

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٢﴾

It is for man to obey Allah in what He commands us, and the Messenger in what he brings us. If we turn away from such obedience, then nothing will befall the Messenger, for his duty is but to clearly inform us. The evil consequences of turning away after being presented the clear delivery will not fall on him, but will fall on those who turn away.

Allah, there is no god but Him; so upon Allah should the believers rely. (13)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

﴿١٣﴾

Allah, He who calls us to accept faith in Him, is He besides whom there is no god. He has no partner and no equal. It is for the believers to entrust their affairs to Him, and to rely on Him.

Having called mankind to belief, the thread now explains some of the believer's enemies who will divert him from faith, so that he may be on his guard against them:

O ye who believe, indeed among your wives and your offspring is an enemy of yours; so be wary of them. And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive – so indeed Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (14)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَأَحْذَرُوهُمْ وَإِن تَعَفَوْا وَتَصَفَّحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

O ye who believe, indeed among your wives and your offspring is an enemy of yours; ... Among a believer's wives and children there may be some disbelievers or hypocrites, who are the believer's enemies. Therefore, it is for him to be wary of them, lest they bar him from the truth and the guidance.

... **And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive ...** It means that when they trouble the believer on account of his faith, he is to pardon them without retaliating, and overlook what they have done and deal with them as on a clean sheet, and forgive them in the full sense of erasing their sin and concealing it and not taking retribution for it. So there are three levels: concealing the sin; refraining from reacting, even in words; and refraining from retaliation.

... **so indeed Allah is oft-forgiving, ...** That is, He forgives the believer, and his erring family, once they repent.

...**most merciful.** He is merciful to His servants. Therefore it is for the believer to learn forgiveness and mercy from Him. And this, in addition to the rewards it accrues, is a wise policy that attracts people to the faith, for peace in the face of the foe lessens their intensity and casts the love of the attitude of the peaceful individual in their hearts, and attracts them towards him.

Indeed your wealth and your offspring are but a trial; and Allah has a magnificent wage. (15)

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

a trial; and Allah has a magnificent wage. (15)

Your wealth and your sons are but a trial; ... Wealth and offspring are the means of a man's examination, so that it becomes clear who is obedient to Allah concerning them, and who is disobedient. These two are mentioned as examples, for otherwise a man's wives and relatives are also means of his being tried and tested.

... **and Allah has a magnificent wage.** ... and immense rewards for he who obeys Allah and refrains from disobeying Him for the sake of his family or wealth.

The fifth Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, *peace be upon him*, has said that when a man wished to migrate to the Messenger of Allah, his sons and wives would come to him and would say they implored him by Allah not to go and not to leave them, for they would perish without him. Among such men were those who obeyed their families and remained, and so Allah warned them of their offspring and their women and forbade them from obeying them. And among them were those who departed and left them behind, and said that if they did not migrate with him and Allah did not reunite them in the home of the migration [that is, Madinah] then he would never benefit them again, ever. So when Allah reunited them with the Messenger, He commanded His Messenger to be good to them and act in their interest, in His word: '*And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive – so indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful.*'

So be guardful of Allah as far as ye are able; and listen and obey and dispense that is better for yourselves. And whosoever is protected from the meanness of his soul, so those are the thrivers. (16)

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا
لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

So be guardful of Allah as far as ye are able; ... It means that we should fear Allah's punishments as much as we can and as far as we are able to, for '*Allah charges no soul save to its capacity.*'

... **and listen and obey** ... It means listen to the Messenger and what he commands ye, and then obey him. And it seems that what is meant by 'listen' is to listen so as to act.

... **and dispense** ... It means dispensing out of one's wealth in the path of Allah.

... **that is better for yourselves** ... It means, dispense that which is best, for what is dispensed returns to the dispenser both in the world and in the hereafter.

... **And whosoever is protected from the meanness of his soul,** ... Protected by Allah from being mean and miserly, so that, with His protection, they are able to dispense in the way he commands.

... **so those are the prosperous ones.** Those whom Allah protects from the miserliness of their souls, are those who achieve true prosperity; for who is more prosperous than he who achieves salvation and eternal felicity?

In any case, the wealth that a person gives does not go to waste without return, rather it is like a loan that a person lends to Allah, and He returns it greatly increased:

If ye lend to Allah a goodly loan, He will multiply it for ye, and forgive ye. And Allah is all-thankful, most clement. (17)

إِنْ تَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضْعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾

If ye lend to Allah a goodly loan, ... When a person lends to Allah a fine loan, by dispensing it for Allah in His path, without beholdenness (*mann*), ostentation (*riya*), and not seeking fame or praise or any other such thing that corrupts a good deed:

...**He will multiply it for ye** ..It means that He will pay it back with an increase, to the extent that for giving one, He will return seven hundred and more.

... **and forgive ye** ... Besides that, He will also give forgiveness, for the sake of that act of dispensing.

... **And Allah is all-thankful**, ... It means that He performs the act of one who is thankful; for when a person is thankful he praises the one to whom he is grateful, and does good to him in return for his kindness, and thus acts Allah, glory be to Him: He praises the giver and pours forth goodness upon him in return for his deed.

... **most clement**. He is not hasty in punishing the disobedient. So, He is thankful to the obedient, clement to the disobedient.

And He knows every act of dispensing and every good deed, and no virtuous act is wasted, for He is:

The Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Mighty, the Wise. (18)

عَلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

The Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, ... His knowledge embraces everything seen and unseen, everything beyond the senses and within their reach, everything held secret and everything disclosed, everything material and everything immaterial. *And He is:*

... **the Mighty, the Wise**. He is absolute in His authority, powerful over all things; and He does everything in wisdom and beneficence.