INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT Al-Munāfiqūn, 63.

This is the seventh of the ten short Madinah Sūras dealing with a special feature in the social life of the Brotherhood.

The special feature here dealt with is the wiles and mischief of the Hypocrite element in any community, and the need of guarding against it and against the temptation it throws in the way of the Believers.

The battle of Uhud (Shawwāl A.H. 3) unmasked the Hypocrites in Madinah: see iii. 167, and n. 476. This Sūra may be referred to some time after that event, say about 4 A.H. or possibly 5 A.H. if the words reported in verse 8 were uttered in the expedition against the Banūl' Mustaliq, A.H. 5. (See n. 5475 below).

Summary.—False are the oaths of the Hypocrites: they only seek selfish ends: Believers should beware of their wiles and strive devotedly always for the Cause (lxiii. 1-11).
Al-Munāfiqūn, or the Hypocrites

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the Hypocrites\footnote{5466. The hypocrite element, if one exists in any society, is a source of weakness and a danger to its health and its very existence. When the holy Prophet came to Madinah in Hijrat, his arrival was welcome to all the patriotic citizens: it not only united them in common life and healed their old differences, but it brought honour and light to them in the person of the greatest living Prophet. But there were some baser elements filled with envy. Such hopes as they had entertained of attaining power and leadership by playing on the animosities of the factions were now dashed to the ground. They now began to work underground. For fear of the majority they dared not oppose the new growing Brotherhood of Righteousness. They tried to undermine it by intriguing secretly with its enemies and swearing openly its loyalty to the holy Prophet. They were thoroughly unmasked and discredited at the battle of Uhud. See iii. 167, and n. 476.} Come to thee, they say, “We bear witness that thou Art indeed the Messenger Of Allah.” Yea, Allah Knoweth that thou art Indeed His Messenger. And Allah beareth witness That the Hypocrites are Indeed liars.

2. They have made their oaths\footnote{5467. Cf. lviii. 16 and n. 5358. When they say that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, it is Allah’s own truth: but what is in their hearts? Nothing but falsehood.} A screen (for their misdeeds): Thus they obstruct (men) From the Path of Allah: Truly evil are their deeds.

3. That is because they believed, Then they rejected Faith: So a seal was set\footnote{5468. Cf. ii. 7. Their double-dealing has fogged their understanding. In Arabic the heart is taken to be the seat of understanding as well as of affection.} On their hearts: therefore They understand not.
4. When thou lookest
   At them, their bodies\(^{5469}\)
   Please thee; and when
   They speak, thou listenest
   To their words. They are
   As (worthless as hollow)
   Pieces of timber propped up,\(^{5470}\)
   (Unable to stand on their own).
   They think that every
   Cry is against them.\(^{5471}\)
   They are the enemies;
   So beware of them.
   The curse of Allah be
   On them! How are they
   Deluded (away from the Truth)!

5. And when it is said
   To them, “Come, the Messenger
   Of Allah will pray for your\(^{5472}\)
   Forgiveness”, They turn aside
   Their heads, and thou wouldst
   See them turning away
   Their faces in arrogance.

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5469. The Hypocrites at all times are plausible people, and so were the Hypocrites of Madinah. They present a fine exterior; they dress well; they can usually afford fine equipages; they try to win the confidence of every one, as they have no scruples in telling lies, and apparently expressing agreement with every one. Their words are fair-spoken, and as truth does not check their tongues, their flattery and deception know no bounds. But all this is on the outside. As they have no sincerity, nothing that they say or do is worth anything.

5470. Good timber is strong in itself and can support roofs and buildings. Hollow timber is useless, and has to be propped up against other things. The Hypocrites are like rotten timber. They have no firm character themselves, and for others they are unsafe props to rely upon.

5471. Their conscience always troubles them. If any cry is raised, they immediately get alarmed, and think it is against themselves. Such men are worse than open enemies.

5472. Even hypocrisy like other sins can be forgiven by repentance and amendment, provided there is a will and earnest desire to turn from evil and seek the Grace of Allah. In this case there was none.
6. It is equal to them
Whether thou pray for
Their forgiveness or not.\textsuperscript{5473}
Allah will not forgive them.
Truly Allah guides not
Rebellious transgressors.

7. They are the ones who say,
“Spend nothing on those
Who are with Allah’s Messenger,\textsuperscript{5474}
Till they disperse
(And quit Madinah).”
But to Allah belong
The treasures of the heavens
And the earth; but
The Hypocrites understand not.

8. They say, “If we\textsuperscript{5475}
Return to Madinah, surely
The more honourable (element)
Will expel therefrom the meaner”.
But honour belongs to Allah

\textsuperscript{5473} The stiff-necked rejecters of Allah’s Truth have made a wide gulf between themselves and Allah’s Grace. No prayer for them will help them. In the attitude of rebellion and transgression they cannot obtain Allah’s forgiveness.

\textsuperscript{5474} The Muhājirūn, who had come to be with the holy Prophet in Madinah in exile, were received, helped, entertained by the Ansār (Helpers). The Hypocrites in Madinah did not like this, and tried in underhand ways to dissuade the good folk of Madinah from doing all they could for the exiles. But their tricks did not succeed. The small Muslim community grew from strength to strength until they were able to stand on their own resources and greatly to augment the resources of their hosts as well. It is goodness that produces strength and prosperity, and Allah holds the keys of the unbounded treasures of Allah.

\textsuperscript{5475} Words of this import were spoken by ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubāi, the leader of the Madinah Hypocrites, to or about the Exiles, in the course of the expedition against the Bānū Mustālīq in the fourth or fifth year of the Hijra. He had hopes of leadership which were disappointed by the coming to Madinah of a man far greater than he. So he arrogated to himself and his clique the title of “the more honourable (element)” and slightingly spoke of the Emigrants as the “meaner” element that had intruded from outside.
And His Messenger, and
To the Believers; but
The Hypocrites know not.

SECTION 2.

9. O ye who believe!
Let not your riches
Or your children divert you
From the remembrance of Allah.
If any act thus,
Surely they are the losers. 5476

10. And spend something (in charity)
Out of the substance 5477
Which We have bestowed
On you, before Death
Should come to any of you
And he should say,
"O my Lord! Why didst
Thou not give me
Respite for a little while?
I should then have given
(Largely) in charity, and I
Should have been one
Of the doers of good".

5476. Riches and human resources of all kinds are but fleeting sources of enjoyment. They should not turn away the good man from his devotion to Allah. "Remembrance of Allah" includes every act of service and goodness, every kind thought and kind deed, for this is the service and sacrifice which Allah requires of us. If we fail in this, the loss is our own, not anyone else's: for it stunts our own spiritual growth.

5477. "Substance" or "Sustenance". Whatever good we enjoy comes from Allah, and it is our duty to use some of it in the service of others, for that is Charity and the service of Allah. Every unselfish act is Charity. And we must not postpone our good resolutions to the future. Death may come suddenly on us, and we cannot then be allowed to plead for more time. Every present moment calls urgently for its good deed.
11. But to no soul
   Will Allah grant respite? When the time appointed
   (For it) has come; and Allah
   Is well acquainted
   With (all) that ye do.

5478. When our limited period of probation is over, we cannot justly ask for more
time, nor will more time be given to us then. Procrastination is itself a fault, and Allah
knows every hidden thought and motive in our minds.