

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 28 – September 18

Note: The title of this chapter is taken from the circumstances narrated in the opening verses. There was an old Arab custom by which the husband put away his wife by calling her as his “mother”, but she was not thus divorced, nor did she continue to hold the status of a wife. A Muslim did the same. The wife complained to the Holy Prophet, and it is by reason of her complaint that she is called *Al-Mujadilah* or *The Pleading Woman*. Islam took up the cause of woman in the greatest earnestness, as, in her person, half the human race was rotting under severe oppression, and Islam came to deal a death-blow to all kinds of oppression under which any class of society laboured. The opening verses are devoted to this matter.

Chapter 58: *Al-Mujadilah* — The Pleading Woman

- 1 Allah indeed has heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah; and Allah hears the contentions of both of you.¹ Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing.
- 2 Those of you who put away their wives by calling them their mothers — they are not their mothers. None are their mothers except those who gave them birth, and they utter indeed a hateful word and a lie. And surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.
- 3 And those who put away their wives by calling them their mothers, then go back on what they said, must free a captive before they touch one another. To this you are exhorted; and Allah is Aware of what you do.²
- 4 But he who does not have the means should fast for two months successively before they touch one another, and he who is unable to do so should feed sixty needy ones. That is in order that you may have faith in Allah and His Messenger. And these are Allah’s limits. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment.
- 5 Surely those who oppose Allah and His Messenger will be humbled as those before them were humbled, and indeed We have revealed clear messages. And for the disbelievers is an humiliating punishment.³

Notes:

- 1 (v. 1) The woman referred to was Khaulah or Khuwailah, wife of Aus ibn Samit, who was separated by her husband in an old Arab form, the husband saying to the wife, *You are to me as the back of my mother*. This practice was known as *Zihār*, and was abolished by Islam. The woman complained about it to the Holy Prophet, who said that, as he had no revelation about it, he could not interfere. Then Aus wanted her to have

conjugal relations with him, but she refused and came to the Prophet complaining of his bad temper. The Prophet wanted her to be more lenient but she was not willing. It was then that the Prophet received this revelation, according to which it was necessary that the husband should in such cases make an expiation before re-establishing conjugal rights.

The verse tells us that Allah *heard* the plea of this woman who *complained* to Allah about her situation. It shows that the prayer of an ordinary person was heard, in this case a woman who complained about her husband, and who was not satisfied with what the Holy Prophet could do for her. Allah then sent His judgment in her favour as revelation to the Holy Prophet.

- 2** (v. 3) Those husbands who indulged in this custom are first reprimanded in the words “they utter indeed a hateful word and a lie”. Then a penalty, of the form of community service, is prescribed for them if they wish to retract their words. They cannot resume the relationship with their wives merely at their whim.
- 3** (v. 5) This verse condemns those who would still resort to this custom despite its prohibition. Those who would not abide by the Divine commandments regarding the treatment of women are here told that this was not a light matter. They were in the ranks of those who opposed the Prophet.