

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: ART THOU NOT aware of those who forsook their homelands in their thousands for fear of death - whereupon God said unto them, "Die," and later brought them back to life?²³² Behold, God is indeed limitless in His bounty unto man - but most people are ungrateful.

Malik: Have you reflected on the case of thousands of people (Israelites) who fled their homes for fear of death? Allah said to them: "Die" (gave them death). Then He gave them life again. Surely Allah is bountiful to mankind, but most of the people are ungrateful.

Mustafa Khattab:

Have you ?O Prophet? not seen those who fled their homes in the thousands for fear of death?1 Allah said to them, "Die!" then He gave them life. Surely Allah is ever Bountiful to humanity, but most people are ungrateful.

Pickthall: Bethink thee (O Muhammad) of those of old, who went forth from their habitations in their thousands, fearing death, and Allah said unto them: Die, and then He brought them back to life. Lo! Allah is a Lord of Kindness to mankind, but most of mankind give not thanks.

Yusuf Ali: Didst thou not turn thy vision to those who abandoned their homes though they were thousands (in number) for fear of death? Allah said to them: "Die." Then He restored them to life. For Allah is full of bounty to mankind but most of them are ungrateful. ²⁷⁴

Transliteration: Alam tara ila allatheena kharajoo min diyarihim wahum oloofun hathara almawti faqala lahumu Allahu mootoo thumma ahyahum inna Allaha lathoo fadlin AAala alInnasi walakinna akthara alInnasi la yashkuroona

Author Comments

232 - After the conclusion of the injunctions relating to marital life, the Qur'an returns here to the problem of warfare in a just cause by alluding to people who - obviously under a hostile attack - "forsook their homelands for fear of death". Now, neither the Qur'an nor any authentic Tradition offers any indication as to who the people referred to in this verse may have been. The "historical" explanations given by some of the commentators are most contradictory; they seem to have been derived from Talmudic stories current at the time, and cannot be used in this context with any justification. We must, therefore, assume (as Muhammad 'Abduh does in Manar II. 455 ff.) that the above allusion is parabolically connected with the subsequent call to the faithful to be ready to lay down their lives in God's cause: an illustration of the fact that fear of physical death leads to the moral death of nations and communities, just as their regeneration (or "coming back to life") depends on their regaining their moral status through overcoming the fear of death. This is undoubtedly the purport of the elliptic story of Samuel, Saul and David told in verses {246-251}.

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They fled in the wake of a plague or an enemy attack.

274 - We now return to the subject of Jihad, which we left at n. 214-216. We are to be under no illusion about it. If we are not prepared to fight for our faith, with our lives and all our resources, both our lives and our resources will be wiped out by our enemies. As to life, God gave it, and a coward is not likely to save it. It has happened again and again in history that men who tamely submitted to be driven from their homes although they were more numerous than their enemies had the sentence of death pronounced on them for their cowardice, and they deserved it. But God gives further and further chances in His mercy. This is a lesson to every generation. The Commentators differ as to the exact episode referred to, but the wording is perfectly general, and so is the lesson to be learnt from it.

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