

﴿But when they meet one another in private﴾ and no one else is present other than their co-religionists, they say to one another:

﴿Why are you telling them what Allah has disclosed to you [of the description of the Prophet in the Torah]﴾ that is, why do you pretend to believe and tell them that you are like them, when that will be proof for them against you, because they will say: They affirmed that what we are following is truth and what they are following is falsehood. Thus they (the believers) will use that against you before your Lord. ﴿Have you no sense?﴾ That is, do you not have the sense to stop doing that which may be used against you? This is what they say to one another.

﴿Do they not realise that Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose?﴾ So even though they concealed what they believed and kept it to themselves, and thought that by being discreet they would be able to avoid giving the believers any argument to use against them, they were wrong and very ignorant, for Allah knew what they concealed and what they disclosed, so He exposed their true nature to His slaves.

﴿And there are among them﴾ that is, among the People of the Book ﴿unlettered people﴾ that is, common folk who are not knowledgeable ﴿who have no knowledge of the Book, except wishful thinking﴾ that is, they have no share of the Book of Allah except recitation that they hear; they know nothing about what the early generations had of true knowledge of it. All these people have is some speculative ideas and they blindly follow the scholars among them.

In these verses, Allah mentions their scholars, common folk, hypocrites and those among them who were not hypocrites. The scholars among them were adhering to their false and misguided religion, and the common folk were blindly following them, with no insight, so there was no hope that either of the two groups would believe in your message.