

to prevent the victim's next of kin from exacting legal retribution, as was customary during the *jāhiliyah* and is still the case in similar environments, where protection is given to the offender.

Then this matter is explained further:

«the free for the free» this includes a male for a male.

«the woman for the woman» this also includes a female for a male, or a male for a female, because the Sunnah indicates that a male may be killed for a female. Excluded from this general meaning are cases involving parents, grandparents and so on; they are not to be killed for killing their child, because there are reports of the Sunnah to that effect. Furthermore, the phrase «legal retribution» indicates that it is not just to kill a parent for killing his child, and the compassion and mercy in the parent's heart prevent him from killing his own child except in cases of mental illness or severe harm caused to him by the child.

Also excluded from the general meaning of this verse is the disbeliever, according to the Sunnah, in addition to the fact that the verse is addressed to believers only. Moreover, it is not justice to kill a friend of Allah (a Muslim) for killing an enemy of Allah (a disbeliever).

«the slave for the slave», whether male or female, and whether they are equal in value or not.

This also indicates that a free man cannot be killed for a slave, because they are not equal. From the phrase «the woman for the woman», some of the scholars understood that it is not permissible to kill a man for a woman; we have discussed this matter above.

This verse indicates that the basic principle is that legal retribution for killing is a must, and that the blood money (*diyah*) is an alternative to it. Hence Allah says: «But if any remission is made by the victim's next of kin» that is, if the victim's next of kin lets the killer off (and does not demand that he be killed), and decides to accept the blood