

if the fighting is defensive, then it is permissible to fight during the sacred months as it is permissible in the sacred land.

This verse was revealed because of what happened to the expedition of ‘Abdullāh ibn Jaḥsh, their slaying of ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥaḍrami and their seizing of their wealth, which happened – according to reports – in the month of Rajab; the polytheists criticised them for fighting during the sacred months, but this was unfair criticism, because they had committed abhorrent deeds that were worse than that for which they were criticising the Muslims. Hence Allah (ﷻ) highlighted their abhorrent deeds:

﴿to bar others from the path of Allah﴾ – the polytheists sought to prevent those who wanted to believe in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), persecuted those who did believe in Him, and strove to make them recant their religion and disbelieve in Him; all of this on its own is sufficient evil, so how about if it occurred during a sacred month and in a sacred land?

﴿to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque and to drive out its people from it﴾ that is, the people of the Sacred Mosque, namely the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions, because they were more deserving of it than the polytheists

﴿from it﴾ and they did not allow them to reach it, even though this House was made for all people, residents and visitors alike.

Each one of these matters on its own ﴿is worse than slaughter﴾ during the sacred month, so how about when they are combined? Thus it is known that they were wrong and unfair in their criticism of the believers.

Then Allah (ﷻ) tells us that they will not cease fighting the believers, and that their aim is not to take their wealth and kill them; rather their aim is to make the believers give up their religion and become disbelievers after having believed, so that they will become people of hell. They are striving their utmost, by all possible means, to achieve that aim.