A Pledge Under the Tree

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Article

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Our Sunni brother very often use the following Verse of Surat al-Fath:

"Allah's good pleasure was on the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the Tree" (48:18)

as evidence to legitimize the stance of certain companions. The Shi'a's stance, on the other hand, is that the holy Verse can not be generalized to an extent that it becomes an umbrella which includes any one who was present in the event. Rather, that Verse is of a of specific nature and not a general one, requiring further analysis.

Background on specific vs. general Verses

"Allah hath promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow. To dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. The greatest of which is the pleasure of Allah: that is the supreme felicity." [***9:72***]

Is any one who is described by others as a *believer* falls into this category of the people of paradise? Even though he might have committed sins, usurped and killed a human soul unjustly. That would be a generalization of the Verse, which no one claims. The believers are those in Allah's (awj) judgment, specifically.

"Allah will say: this is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home: Allah well pleased with them, and they with Allah: that is the great salvation, (***the fulfillment of all desires***)***."*** [***5:119***]

The same here with the truthful. Clearly it does not apply to any person who was truthful at one time or truthful in what he says, but at the same time he commits sins. That would be taking the Verse literally and generalizing that one may enter paradise on this particular quality, regardless, which is no one's belief.

"...give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, Who say, when afflicted with calamity: to Allah we belong, and to him is our return. They are those in whom (***descend***) ***blessing from Allah and mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance."*** [***2:155-157***]

As is the case, if one is to take this Verse literally and generally to mean that any one who uttered the words *"to Allah we belong, and to him is our return"* is somehow deserving of the blessings of Allah (awj) with disregard to all of his other actions or intentions.

The Verse of the Pledge under the Tree is not general

The exclusion of the *people* from this Verse is clear, once the Verse is understood properly. In it Allah (swt) narrowed down those worthy of His pleasure, who pledged under the tree, by certain evidence that Quran spoke off. He frankly showed how the people are excluded in its wording. One needs to consider the Verse in its completeness to see the proof.

"Allah's good pleasure was on the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down tranquillity to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy victory." [48:18] 1

You can see that Allah (awj) has specified His pleasure with those among them whom He knew were:

1) genuinely sincere to their oath to Allah (awj). He (awj) further described such a person, from among them, with

2) firmness in wartime, through God given tranquility. And finally, that

3) *Victory* will be by him and on his hands. Furthermore, at the onset of the Verse, Allah (awj) spoke specifically of those

4) believers who were under the *Tree*, which means that others were present who did not fall in this category; therefore the Verse was not general to whomever was in attendance.

It is clear from the title of the Sura *Victory*, that it has to do with Islam's war victory. It is also agreed upon among Muslims that the first war encountered by the Prophet (S) after *The Pledge of Pleasure* "Bay'at al-Ridhwan" is the war of Khaybar. They have also agreed that the Prophet (S) pushed abu-Bakr forward and gave him the flag/banner, but he came back when he saw Marhab, and did not do anything. Then the Prophet (S) passed the flag to Omar, and again he came back empty handed, as the Sunni narrators and historians have recorded.

The Prophet (S) then said: "I shall give the flag tomorrow to a man, who loves Allah and His messenger and is loved by Allah and His messenger, attacks with firmness, not a retreats; he does not return until Allah provides victory at his hands."

Sunni Reference:

- Bukhari, v5, p245-246, #678 & #679

The next day it was given to Ali (as). He found Marhab and killed him, then was the victory on his hands. Hence, the pleasure of Allah (awj), clearly, has to do with Ali (as) and his followers who were in his company. The Quran supports this view in the Verse:

"And yet they had already covenanted with Allah not to turn their backs, and a covenant with Allah must (surely) be answered for." **[33:15]**

The above Verse clearly states that those who turn their backs, run away and not keep their oath to Allah; will be subjected to questioning on judgment day. Consequently, it is not logical or reasonable that both pleasure and questioning be combined at the same time. This would be a discrepancy, the Quran is surely above such.

"If any does turn his back to them on such a day, unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own); he draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and his abode is Hell – an evil refuge (indeed)!" **[8:16]**

Moreover, Allah (awj) has warned those who run away and turn their backs with His anger; as well as, promised the believers who keep their covenant with Him with His pleasure and everlasting good fortune.

Therefore, if the earlier Verse meant to be a blanket of pleasure over any and all who were under the Tree, in general without restriction, then it would have been invalid for this Verse and its warning to exist. The companions have turned their backs while they were not practicing tricks of war or retreating in support their own troops.

Finally, another witness that can not be doubted is Verse 23 in Surat al-Ahzab. Clearly, the Verse makes special mention of those who kept their covenant: from among the believers. Meaning not all who made the convenient did keep it.

"Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah: of them some have completed their vow (to the extreme), and some (still) wail: but they have never changed (their determination) in the least;" **[33:23]**

Pleasure of Allah (awj)

If one were to assume, for the purpose of argument, that Allah (swt) was pleased with *all* the people under the *Tree*, this would not benefit the position of the Sahabah (companions). For it is an indication that Allah (swt) was pleased with their past actions and not necessarily their future, because prior action is not a guarantee of future behavior to anyone who is fallible.

The Prophet's (S) Prophecies about his Companions

Allah (swt) informed the Prophet (S) of the deviation of some of his companions. So the prophet addressed them directly, as is clear from these traditions. Here are some of these traditions in Bukhari's collection, volume 9, pp. 503-506 (the full chain was eliminated for brevity).

#1435 – Narrated by Abdullah and Huthaifa, the Prophet (S) said: “I am ahead of you at the pool. From amongst you are men who will be raised with me then taken away from me, then I will say: O' my God: my companions! It will be said: you do not know what innovation they made after you.”

#1441 – Narrated by Anas that “The Prophet (S) said: People from my companions will come to me at the Pool, until they are near enough to know them, they drop away from me. I say: My companions?! He will say: You do not know what they invented after you.”

#1442 – Narrated Sahl bin Saad “The Prophet (S) said: I am ahead of you at the Pool, whomever passes by me drinks, and one who drinks will never (feel) thirst ever. There will be peoples, I know them and they know me, then they will be separated from me.”

Abu Hazim said that al–Nu'man bin Abi–'Ayyash said that he heard it from Sahl like this. He then said: I bear witness that I (also) heard Abi Saeed al–Khudri say it and he added to it “So I say they are mine! It will be said: you do not know what they innovated after you. So I say: crushed, crushed (or far away from me) to any who changed (things) after me.”

Abu Hurairah used to say: “The Prophet (S) said: On the Day of Judgment, a number of my companions will be brought to me. They will be taken from the Pool. So I say: O' God! My companions? He will say: You have no knowledge of what they innovated after you – they became apostates and retreated backwards.”

#1443 – Shihab bin al–Musayyab told: “The Prophet (S) said: Certain men from my companions will come to me at the Pool. Then they will be prevented (“removed” per Abu Hurairah) from it, so I say: O' my God! My companions? He says: You have no knowledge what they innovated after you. They have retreated backwards, apostates.”

#1444 – Abu Hurairah narrated “The Prophet (S) said: While I am standing, a group (comes), when I recognize them, a man appears from between us and them; he said: Come along! I said: Where to? He said: To Hell Fire, by Allah! I said: What is there problem? He said: The became apostates after you (left them) retreated backwards. Then a group (comes), when I recognize them, a man appears from between us and them; he said: Come along! I said: Where to? He said: To Hell Fire, by Allah! I said: What is there problem? He said: The became apostates after you (left them) retreated backwards. So I do not see but a few survive from amongst them.”

#1449 – Asmaa bint Abi Bakr said: “The Prophet (S) said: I am at the Pool to see who comes to me from among you. A people will be taken away from me, so I say: O' my God, from me and my nation! So it will be said: Did you sense what they did after you (left them)? By Allah, they did not stop retreating backwards.” Ibn Abi Malika used to say: “Allahumma we beseech you that we don't retreat backwards or be mislead away from our religion, the way they retreated on their backs.”

A Companion Admits to Innovations

The companion al-'Alaa bin al-Musayyab said his father met al-Buraa bin 'Azib (ra) and said to him: "Good for you! You accompanied the Prophet (S) and pledged allegiance to him under the *Tree*. So he said: O' son of my brother, you do not know what we innovated after him."

Sunni Reference: al-Bukhari, v5, p234, #645.

General References

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2. *The Quran*, Translation by S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali

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