An Enlightening Commentary Into The Light Of The Holy Qur'an Vol. 1

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Compiler: A Group of Muslim Scholars, under the direction of Ayatullah Allamah Al-Hajj Sayyid Kamal Faqhih Imani

Translated by
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SHARES

Sub Title:
From Surah al-Fatiha (1) to Surah al-Baqarah (2) v. 154

Publisher(s):

Imam Ali Foundation [2]

This text provides a clear, accessible English translation and exegesis (Tafsir) of the first volume of the Holy Qur'an, spanning from Surah Al-Fatiha to verse 154 of Surah Al-Baqarah.

This volume focuses heavily on core Islamic principles: the Oneness of God (Tawhid), the strategic and spiritual necessity of the Hereafter, and the divine appointment of the Prophet (S) and his immaculate household, the Ahl al-Bayt (a). The text covers:

Surah Al-Fatiha: An exploration of its unique tone as a direct prayer from servant to Creator, its role as the foundation of the Qur'an, and a detailed breakdown of the layers of divine mercy (ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim).

Surah Al-Baqarah: Insights into the mysteries of creation, the historical accounts of Prophets Ibrahim (a) and Musa (a), the mystery behind the abbreviated letters (Muqatta'at), and practical social frameworks.

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Translator(s):

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Topic Tags:

Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsir) [7]
Surat al-Fatihah [8]
Surat al-Baqara [9]

Important notice:

The Ahlul Bayt DILP team would like to inform readers of the following regarding this digitised text.

During the editing and digitisation process, the DILP team identified various typographical, spelling, transliteration, and referencing inconsistencies. To improve clarity, readability, and accuracy, grammatical and orthographic corrections have been made, and the transliteration of Arabic names and terms has been standardised where appropriate.

In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in bookshops.

Those who understand are advised to refer directly to the original text.

Miscellaneous information:
An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an vol. 1 From Surah al-Fatiha (1) to Surah al-Baqarah (2) v. 154 Compiler: A Group of Muslim Scholars, under the direction of Ayatullah Allamah Al-Hajj Sayyid Kamal Faqhih Imani. Translator: Mr. Sayyid Abbas Sadr-Ameli Published by: The Scientific and Religious Research Center Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a s.) Public Library, under the direction of Ayatullah Allamah Al-Hajj Sayyid Kamal Faqhih Imani. Address: Shekar Shekan Crossroads, Ahmadabad Street Post Office Box 1465/5151, Esfahan Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran: 281000, 282000, 296487 Fax 0098 31 297028

Person Tags:

Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani [10]

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا

***Verily this Qur'an doth guide to that which is most right* (*or stable*) (*to run societies*), *and giveth the Glad Tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward* (*17:9*).**

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هٰؤُلَاءِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

…We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad tidings to Muslims (***16:89***).

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, Say: 'Peace be on you: Your Lord hath inscribed for Himself (***the rule of***) ***mercy; verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amended*** (***his conduct***)***, lo! He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful'*** (***6:54***).

The light of Islam is illuminating hearts of individuals in nearly all parts of the world, in spite of heavy barriers and careful controls and religious interrogation exerted by not only many governments of non-Muslim nations, but also in some Muslim countries, against their believing people, especially during the years after the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

The effective influence of the light of the truth together with the speed in the movement of the Age has brought forth a more vital exchange of thought and religious ideology in connection with the Holy Qur'an.

In regard to this, we refer to what the Messenger of Allah (S) has said about it:

When afflictions surround you like the dark night refer to the Qur'an, because, it is an Intercessor whose intercession is accepted. It reports the evils (*of people*) *which will be confirmed. It leads the person to Heaven who puts it in front of himself* (*follows it*)*; and he who puts it behind himself* (*neglects it*) *will be driven to Hell.*

This very Qur'an is the best guide to the best ways. It is a Book in *which there are useful explanations, statements and gaining* (*of goals*)*. It is the Separator* (*of right and wrong*)*.* [1]

Obviously, those people whose language is not Arabic can refer to the Holy Book in English, because this is an international language and it is possible for all nations with any native language, to read and understand it in English. As far as we know, there are more than 50 different English translations of Qur'an available in Iran alone, and probably others exist in libraries (and homes) throughout the world.

This makes it easy for the lovers of truth to obtain the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic ideology, through the medium of English, which formerly was acquired directly by the Arabic and Persian languages.

But a fact should be mentioned here that not all of the words of Allah are easily understood by ordinary people and need explanatory commentary, i.e. 'Tafsir'.

Alongside this path, there are some problems that those eager to learn the Qur'anic truth should know and be careful of. Hence, we deal here with some of the difficulties we were involved in and recognized

when we were preparing this endeavour; the fruit of our humble labour of more than three years, a translation of the commentary of over one section (of the 30 sections) of the Holy Qur'an from different commentary sources.

The work is based upon popular commentaries accepted by Muslim scholars. We consulted other books and present living scholars, learned in the Qur'anic Sciences for our work to produce this commentary in a simple standard of English easily understood by the laymen.

The style of writing here is a mixture of British-English and American-English, understandable for all the readers; even for those acquainted with only one of them. However, excuse us for using interchangeable spellings. If both are used, from time to time, they are acceptable; for example, 'honour' and 'honor'.

Not All English Versions of Qur'an Are Acceptable

Some Western translators of the Holy Qur'an; not all of them, and some producers of literature on Islam in the English language, are the anti-Muslim elements which are busy in distorting the facts about the faith to create disruption in Islamic ideology.

These hostile minds have attempted to black-list the Holy Prophet (S) and the religion of Islam, through their purposeful and subtle mis-translations, mis-interpretations, mis-representations and distortion of the facts.

The distortion and the misinterpretations are so skilfully decorated in linguistic excellence and delusive logic that the blind lovers of the English language, who are hardly or even totally unaware of the actual Qur'anic factors of their own faith, get caught up in the falsehood tempered with eloquence and they swallow the 'sugar-coated poisonous pills of deceit' allowing themselves to become duly conditioned to serve the purpose of the publications of the hostile camps.

The current standing of Evil has always been against the Truth in the history of man, even before written history, when the sons of Adam came into existence.

When these antagonistic elements have successfully extended their active influence upon our own religion, ideology and social tradition, we are also duty bound to Allah, His Final Word (the Holy Qur'an), the Faith, and to Islam, to do our best to present to every sincere seeker of Truth, a selection of a translation of the verses of the Holy Qur'an of the original Arabic text, and the 'Tafsir' (commentary) of them.

By the way, we believe that it is the essential belief of 'Shi'a' that the present Qur'an, that which is in our hands today, is the Holy Book of Allah, revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), as arranged and compiled during his lifetime and read out to him and it contains nothing less or more than what was revealed. And it should be noted that:

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ

Nay, but it is a Glorious Qur'an (***85:21***).

فِي لَوْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ

(***Inscribed***) ***in a tablet preserved*** (***85:22***).

whose present arrangement is the order in which the various verses were sorted and arranged at the command of the Holy Prophet (S), himself.

This is the uncorrupted or undisturbed Word of Allah, the preservation of which has been guaranteed by Allah, Himself:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (***from corruption***) (***15:9***).

Furthermore, the English translations, along with the Arabic text of the verses, in this book, are selected from different translations of English versions of the Holy Qur'an, (whose names are listed at the end of the book under the title of '**References**') which are from the best available sources in which some better styles and more proper meanings are employed. The translator and editor did their best to preserve this divine message and in conveying the Qur'anic facts in English.

In a few instances this writer, the translator, changed a word of those existing translations to a better one, from the existing material which was employed in this work.

What Is A 'Commentary'?

A pure, correct, accurate translation of the Qur'an is necessary, but sometimes it is difficult for the readers to understand all of the apparent and hidden meanings and it is the duty of every Muslim, man or woman to read, understand and contemplate on the Holy Qur'an according to his own capacity:

فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

...Read you ye, therefore, of the Qur'an as much as may be easy (***for you***) ***...*** (***73:20***).

This reading has to be done not only with the tongue, voice and eyes; a mere recitation, but, also, with

the best light that our intellect can supply, and even more, with the truest and purest light which our heart and conscience give us.

However, it is not always possible to fully understand the Holy Book as Allah says:

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ

That this is indeed a Qur'an Most Honourable (***56:77***).

فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ

Which none shall touch (***In Book well-guarded***) (***56:78***).

لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

But those who are purified (***Which none shall touch but those who are clean***) (***56:79***).

Thus, some additional information is needed. For example, it is sometimes necessary, for understanding the text, to refer to the particular occasion for the revelation of a particular verse; or to know the philological changes of a word used at the time of revelation or before it and the meaning that it has in Arabic, today.

Or the alphabetical symbols which evidently and undoubtedly are secrets, and especially the ambiguous / mutashabihat /; the knowledge of which has been announced to be with the / rasixuna fil 'ilm /; those deeply established in knowledge.

They are some things that only 'the particular ones, the sinless ones', besides the Prophet (S), himself, viz, Ahl al-Bayt, knew with all the Qur'anic facts and talked about them in their traditions and narrations as He says:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا...

...And whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence (***18:65***).

For instance, the Apostle, himself, answered the questions which used to be asked by people as to the meaning of certain words in the verses revealed, or details of certain historical or spiritual matters on which they sought more enlightenment. These answers and explanations or in other words, the commentaries were gathered by some Companions /ashab/ and were afterward written down which are

called ‘Hadith’ or ‘traditions’.

Of course, the Holy Prophet (S) had openly declared in Hadith ath-Thaqalayn that the Qur’an is with the Ahl al-Bayt, and to avoid going astray, the Muslims should be attached to these two. Later, the Ahl al-Bayt’s explanations and narrations, were added to them and together with the effect of expert religious scholars, in the past and present, established ‘Exegesis’ (explanation of Qur’an) which became a science in itself and was called ‘Tafsir’, commentary.

‘Commentary’ shows how every verse, or group of verses, were revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) on a particular occasion, but which also has a general meaning. The particular occasion and the particular people concerned have passed away, but the general meaning and its application remain true for all time.

This is also one of the miracles of the Qur’an that with the help of ‘commentary’ it is always open and it is always new for those new generations to come.

The Current Commentary

As was mentioned earlier, the light of Islam is enlightening every corner in the world and seekers of truth, having referred to the translations of the Holy Qur’an, find that they need ‘Tafsir’, (commentary).

Some of them, Shi’a believers in particular have been led to this Center; Imam ‘Ali (‘a) Library, requesting a clear, concise English Tafsir; ‘a commentary of the Holy Qur’an’.

From the beginning of Islam until today (although many times the Holy Qur’an has been translated into English and a few of them are published with brief, detailed commentary, as footnotes, there has rarely been, as far as we know, a fairly complete commentary in English sufficient for them to find their answers. So, the decision was made to supply this commentary.

Ayatullah Mujahed Al-Hajj, Allamah Sayyid Kamal Faqhih Imani, the founder and responsible party of this Islamic Scientific Research Center, approached us and reported the situation to scholars and appropriate research societies.

Then 12 people, who had varying nationalities and educational backgrounds, especially from the point of the English language and Islamic Theology, gathered. In their first gathering, which was held on 28th Safar, 1412 (1370 H. / 1991), they concluded that the commentary of the whole Qur’an which they intended to supply in English, would take many years to produce.

In order to quench the thirst of the lovers of Truth who had demanded it again and again, they decided to supply the commentary of the last section of the Qur’an, as a sample, and after its publication and receiving constructive comments by the readers and with a better skilfulness of the ones involved, the translation of the commentary would begin from the beginning of the Holy Qur’an.

Therefore, they thought it would be better that the sample, entitled **"An Enlightening Commentary Into The Light Of The Holy Qur'an",** begin with Surah Al-Insan, the end of the 29th Section, because the Qur'an was revealed for the improvement of Man and this Surah is about Man and his creation from a lowly life-germ which can develop unto the highest point where no other creature can ascend.

But, after several weeks the number of us dwindled to a handful and after some months, until the present, we remain two people; the translator and the editor. During this period of more than three years, a few people have tried their hands at this task to have a share in the translation, but, for different reasons, they were not successful.

However, we are completely grateful for their efforts and extend our thanks for their attempts, as well as to those who had any involvement in this work.

Attributes Needed for Working on this kind of Commentary

This endeavour needed not only the knowledge and skilfulness in the English language, but also the knowledge of Arabic, and Islamic science and culture, because Tafsir is an attempt to analyse and explain the meaning of verses in the Holy Qur'an.

Moreover, Allah, Himself, says:

> وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

We have sent down to thee the book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims (***16:89***).

Then, it needs that those involved know a little bit about almost all sciences and knowledge that human beings are concerned with when working with the commentary. Also, the phonetic sound systems of the two languages, English and Arabic, are different. Therefore, when an Arabic word from the Qur'an is mentioned in the English text, it is shown with the phonetic alphabet and in its special phonetical sign, i.e.: / /, to avoid using 'Arabic script' in the book, as far as possible.

A transliteration table of the Arabic letters and sounds and the corresponding phonetic signs, applied in this book, is given at the beginning of the book.

The Problems In Translating

We tried to avoid mixing up our own personal theories and conclusions with the interpretation of the text itself. With the help of Allah, we did our best; at times asking for guidance from some learned religious men (Ruhaniyan), and used all the knowledge and experience we possessed in the service of the Holy

Qur'an for its commentary, hoping that Allah accepts it.

The nature of this sort of endeavour is so that, in the course of translation, some difficulties arise from various causes.

For instance, cultures in the Arabic language and English language are different so that some of the words like / amrun bayn al amrayn / in the case of fatalism and freewill are nearly impossible to translate into English, because of the difference in the concept in English literature; or the meaning of a word like 'prostration', in English, is rather different with what /sajdah/ exactly means in Arabic.

In such cases, we selected the meaning of the words from among what the earlier commentators and philologists used and where they were not unanimous, we also used the ideas of new writers, who had reasonable advantages in their interpretations, when the senses adopted with the commentary sources that we were taking and translating materials from. Explanations, of course are always helpful which we took benefit from, too.

It is noteworthy that there are some circumstances in the text, of the commentary, in which a verse or verses of Qur'an from other Suras rather than the Surah under discussion are mentioned as evidence or, thereby, for strengthening the idea.

The text of these verses and also the traditions and narrations from the Holy Prophet or Ahl al–Bayt (ʿa) is printed in bolder type than the running commentary in order to distinguish, at a glance, the substance from the shadow. Also, the mentioned verses are generally taken from A. Yusuf 'Ali's translation.

It Was Only By His Merciful Will!

Translators Note

Both the editor and the translator have interesting factual stories to tell of how the way of this endeavour was paved by Providence and how they were divinely led to be absorbed into this task, Alhamdulillah. A few words given here in this regard are not to be misunderstood as a display of vanity for any peculiar distinction; for there is none.

It is purely to attract the attention of the readers to a living instance of the Providential implementation of the divine plan and how man drifts to his assignment and how matters are automatically manipulated, though, they seem yet only to be circumstantial.

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ

***He said: 'Our Lord is He Who gave to each* (*created*) *thing its form and nature and further gave* (*it*) *guidance'* (*20:50*).**

For example, once, on a night, the writer of these lines, the translator, had seen in a dream that the Holy Qur'an, was placed, honourably, on a high position, wide open, high above a very great crowd of people amongst whom he was standing, watching. The full name of his was clearly written in the midst of the writings on the right page of it with magnificent bold letters.

The dream was obviously a good one, but it did not mean vividly to him at that time.

It was four years before he found out, in the course of translating the commentary of verses 11–16 from Surah 'Abasa, 80:11–16, both the meaning of that dream and the cause of later changes in his career of twenty years, as a manager of a profitable Foreign Language Center, thanks to Allah.

It is always true what the Qur'an says:

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

You will not wish unless Allah wills, surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise (***76:30***).

By His graceful arrangement this writer was separated from his almost material gains, of this fleeting world, to be set toward the assured, perfect, pure, spiritual rewards of the next, everlasting world from Him, Allah willing, when he began translating the commentary of the Qur'an and entered this great Divine Ocean of light, he found out that from earlier times such a success had been appointed and bestowed to him by Allah.

Therefore, all changes and graceful arrangements directly are from Him and it was His helpful Will that planned His graceful design and showered the ability and insight upon us to lead us to the present point. We are eagerly in hopes that He will help us and guide us in all cases to complete the task successfully so that He accepts it from us.

Editor's Note

In my case, it is a fact that only by the grace of Allah have I come to be at the helm working, side-by-side with the translator, on this commentary of the Holy Qur'an. Editing and checking this translation of **"An Enlightening Commentary Into The Light Of The Holy Qur'an"** has been a most important and rewarding experience for me.

To be of value in this work several things were necessary; my mother tongue, English, was almost at the top of the list. Then, having the ability to use a computer and printer, which involved me having to learn and use a Farsi program named Zarnegar, produced in Tehran, Iran, I was able to make use of the wonderful array of fonts it contains; necessary to type the Arabic and English languages.

Next, living in Iran, for four years, has made it possible for me to become acquainted with the native

language and customs. However, the greatest asset, of all, is that I am a Shi'a Muslim woman.

It is fifteen years from now, that in America, I became enlightened to the existence of the Holy Qur'an and accepted it as a better way of life. Over this period of time, it has put me in touch with the purity of the religion and the logical answers to the religious questions I had as a Catholic.

My father told us (during our childhood) that if we ever wanted to know anything we should go to the source and to always have the correct tools on hand to do the job right.

When I started hearing and seeing, on television, the upheaval of the Islamic Revolution, in Iran, and the speech of a brave and courageous man they called Ayatullah Khomeini, I became very intense on knowing why it was happening and in knowing who this man was who had been exiled and was making his return to his homeland.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

***Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling* (*Us*) *to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous* (*3:193*).**

It was something more spectacular than I had ever read about in my high school history books. There was a charge in it that I could not explain, and up until that time, I had never really heard anything about Islam, Prophet Muhammad or Muslims, for that matter.

I bought **A. Yusuf 'Ali's English Translation of the Holy Qur'an,** basing my decision on my father's counsel and I began from page one.

It was talking about the same things I had already learned; Adam and Eve in the Garden, disobeyed God due to the wiles of Satan and then, were expelled to Earth; Moses is given the scripture and leads his people out of Egypt, but they forfeited their covenant for a golden calf; Abraham, Ismail and Issac of the religion true, and there, Mary.

يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ...

***... Hail Mary!* (*Chaste, pure, chosen above other women*)*, given glad tidings of a Word from Him; his name will be Christ Jesus, son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of* (*the company of*) *those nearest to Allah"* (*3:45*).**

And it went on: Practise charity, take care of the orphans, speak a speech that is just, beware of the deceits of the Unbelievers...I was in awe as I neared the end. No place was any obscenity found –no

trace of ugliness which I found in the Bible –nothing but pure scripture; a complete religion, the one and only continuing from the first of Abraham. So, it became crystal clear to me that Islam is the final, refined message from God.

True, just, undeniable, containing what I had always felt and that is this: There is only One God; unique, needing no partner, powerful, and yet merciful and kind. How could God be more than one; Creator of such a vast universe and more?

With this understanding, though, came many tests to my new–found–faith; albeit necessary tests. Did I really believe – did I really submit to His Will – was I really worthy?

I began by only putting on a scarf, covering all of my hair.

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ

And say to the believing women…; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers … (***24:31***).

Immediately the responses that I encountered proved the rightness of it all. I was chided, spit at, hit and cursed. Well, of course, a great deal of this was due to the propaganda which caused mass hysteria against Iran and not having their facts straight about the religion of Islam, however, it hurt just the same, but I had learned forgiveness and perseverance from my mother.

It was difficult for my family in the beginning; this change I was making; however, we are very close at heart, today, due to my faith and reliance on Allah.

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood' (***17:24***).

Almost at once the veils over my understanding fell away and I started rejecting a lot of the 'big–business' propaganda that had infiltrated into my life.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand–hold, that never breaks (***2:256***).

The ‘Big Sell’ eats away at the very fabric of human society to the point that life has only a superficial meaning and high value is put on every inanimate object which man can produce.

زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe. But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection; for Allah bestows His abundance on whom He will (***2:212***).

I had developed an intense desire to go to Iran––the country of martyrs; having an air so thick with emotions, direction and goal, at that time, and having the presence of an undeniable strength caressing it in the hands of an unseen power.

Ten years after I started practicing the tenets of Islam the opportunity presented itself for me to be able to fulfil my desire.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

Not equal are those believers who sit (***at home***) ***and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit*** (***at home***) ***...*** (***4:95***).

I wished very much to become involved in some type of work regarding the Holy Qur’an and in due time I was approached to work with a group of people on a commentary of the Holy Qur’an.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا...

... And for those who fear Allah, He (***ever***) ***prepares a way out*** (***65:2***).

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

And He provides for him from (***sources***) ***he never could imagine...*** (***65:3***).

Those of you who know anything about the rigors of editing know that it is very time–consuming and attention to detail is very necessary.

Spending many hours discussing the meaning of a single word, or phrase, can cause the ordinary soul to become frustrated, but that frustration is ultimately quelled when peace and tranquillity cover the heart at the point where there is that final agreement and gives those involved renewed enthusiasm to continue.

Sometimes you will notice more spacing than usual on a line or within the phonetic brackets (/ /), but this is due to the fact that the Zarnegar program is a Farsi program and it took much time trying to place the little phonetic line over, or the little dot under, the correct letter, because English is written from left to right and Farsi is written from right to left, so, I had a bit of anarchy on my hands for a time.

I leave you, now, in the hopes that you, too, will be provoked to question and seek. (Seek and you will find). Looking back, I feel that Allah does consider me worthy.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light (***2:257***).

Wa as-Salam.

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1. Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 599.

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Tafsir Nemunah is compiled by the great writer and researcher, His Eminence Ayatullah al-Uzma Nasir Makarim Shirazi, and with the cooperation of an estimable group of Muslim scholars, Hujaj Aali slam:

1. Hujjat al-Islam Muhammad Ridha' Ashtiyani

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6. Hujjat al-Islam Muhsen Qara'ati

7. Hujjat al-Islam Muhammad Muhammadi

By the way, it should be notified that for the translation of this volume, Tafsir Nemunah has been mainly utilized.

****

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا

***O mankind! verily there has come to you a convincing proof* (*the Messenger and the Qur'an*) *from your Lord: For We have sent unto you a light* (*that is*) *manifest* (*4:174*).**

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

***We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly Guard it* (*from corruption*) (*15:9*).**

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ

***But whosoever turns away from My Message,* (*the Qur'an*), *verily for him is a straitened toilsome life, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement* (*20:124*).**

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

***And We send down* (*stage by stage*) *of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy for those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss* (*17:82*).**

[1] [1]
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SHARES

A Presentation to Muslims

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَطِيعُواْ اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ الرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي الأَمْرِ مِنكُ

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you (***4:59***)***.***

'Those charged with authority' are only the twelve sinless Imams ('a) and; at the time of occultation, Sources of Imitation, who are learned, pious, and just, should be referred to.

في إكمال الدين في حديث عن جابر الجعفي عن جابر بن عبد الله الانصاري قال: قلت: يا رسول الله عرفنا الله ورسوله، فمن اولي الامر الذين قرن الله طاعتهم بطاعتك؟ فقال (ص) هم خلفائي يا جابر، وأئمة المسلمين بعدي أولهم علي بن أبي طالب، ثم الحسن والحسين، ثم علي بن الحسين، ثم محمد بن علي المعروف في التوراة بالباقر

وستدركه يا جابر فإذا لقيته فاقرأه مني السلام. ثم الصادق جعفر بن محمد، ثم موسى بن جعفر، ثم علي بن موسى، ثم محمد بن علي، ثم علي بن محمد، ثم الحسن بن علي، ثم سميي وكنيي حجة الله في أرضه، وبقيته في عباده ابن الحسن بن علي، ذاك الذي يفتح الله على يديه مشارق الارض ومغاربها

In '*Ikmal ad-Din*' a tradition, through 'Jabir al-Ju'fi', is narrated from Jabir Ibn Abdillah thus:

I said:

"O Messenger of Allah*, we have known Allah and His Apostle; then who is 'Ulil-Amr', those that* Allah *has made their obedience the same as your obedience?'*

Then, the Prophet (S) said:

'O Jabir! They are, after me, my successors and the Guides of Muslims; the first of them is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib; then (*Imam*) *Hasan, and* (*Imam*) *Husain; then 'Ali Ibn il-Husain; then Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, known in the Torah as Baqir, whom you will see.*

O Jabir! When you visit him, give my regards to him. After him, there is Sadiq, Ja'far Ibn Muhammad; and after him Musa Ibn Ja'far; then 'Ali Ibn Musa; then Muhammad Ibn 'Ali; then 'Ali Ibn Muhammad, then Hasan Ibn 'Ali; and after him (*there comes*) *Al-Qa'im whose name and sir-name is the same as mine. He is Allah's Authority on the Earth and His Remainder amongst His servants.*

He is the son of (*Imam*) *Hasan Ibn 'Ali* (*al-Askari*)*. This is the very personality by whose hands Allah will open the Easts and Wests of the world.'*[1]

قال الله تعالى:

Allah Ta'ala said:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

***Nor does he* (*the Apostle*) *speak out of desire* (*53:3*).**

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

***It is naught but revelation that is revealed* (*53:4*).**

قال النبي (ص): "إني تارك فيكم التقلين، كتاب الله حبل ممدود من السماء إلى الأرض وعترتي أهل بيتي، وإن اللطيف الخبير أخبرني أنهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا علي الحوض فانظروا بماذا تخلفوني" وفي حديث آخر: "لن

تضلوا ما إن تمسكتم بهما”

The Prophet (S) said:

“I leave behind me two weighty (very worthy and important) things:

The book of Allah (i.e. the Qur’an), which is a stretched string from the heaven to the earth, and my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt; for verily Allah, The Merciful, The Aware, informed me that never, never, will these Two get separated from each other until they meet me at the Houd of Kauthar (the Pond of Abundance).

Therefore, be careful and contemplate on how you will treat them (after me)”

...and in another tradition, it is added:

“Never, never, shall you get astray if you attach yourself to these two”.[2]

Abul Hasan ar-Ridha’ (‘a) said:

“May the Mercy of Allah be upon the servant who Keeps alive our commandment”.

I asked him (‘a) how the one could keep your commandment alive.

He (‘a) said:

“He (can) learn our sciences and teach them to people. In fact, if people knew (the merits) and goodnesses of our speech, surely, they would follow us.”[3]

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1. Ikmal ad-Din, Vol. 1, p. 253; with nearly similar meaning, in Yanabi al-Mawaddah, p. 117.
2. Ma’ani al-Akhbar, p. 90, tradition 2, and Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Vol. 3, p.17, and other books from the Sunnite School and Shi ‘ah School mentioned in Ihqaq al-Haqq, Vol. 9, p. 309 to 375.
3. Ma’ani al-Akhbar, p. 180 and ‘Uyun al-Akbar ar-Ridha’, Vol. 1, p. 207.

[1] [1]
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Surah Al-Fatiha - Chapter 1

Surah Al-Fatiha

(The Opening)

No. 1 (7 Verses)

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful (1:1).

الْحَمْدُ للّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

(All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds. (1:2).

الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Beneficent, The Merciful. (1:3).

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgement. (1:4).

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help. (1:5).

اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ

Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path. (1:6).

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor (of those) gone astray. (1:7).

Contents of the Surah

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

***In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful* (*1:1*).**

The Holy phrase ***'In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful'*** /bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ is, in fact, mentioned both at the onset of the Qur'an and at the beginning of every Surah, except Surah 91. And, since the purpose of Allah's Word, i.e. the whole Qur'an, is to guide people; as Surah Al-Ma'idah, say:

***...Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah* (*5:15*).**

***With it Allah guideth him who follows His pleasure to the ways of peace and safety...* (*5:16*).**

Therefore, this guidance, being a grant and a fundamental principle, begins with Allah's Holy Name.

This Surah, among all Surahs of the Qur'an: has an extraordinary radiance which originates from the following merits:

1. The Tone of the Surah

This Surah, The Opening, in comparison with other Surahs of the Qur'an regarding its tone and melody, has a particular style which is, clearly different and extraordinary. The other Surahs contain instructions from Allah, Who gives commands and admonishments to His servants, but, in this Surah, His words are uttered on behalf of the servants. In other words, in this Surah, Allah has taught His servants how to supplicate and speak to Him, simply and without a mediator.

2. Al-Fatiha, the Basis of the Qur'an

It is narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) has said: *"By the One, in Whose hand is my soul, Allah has not sent down a similar Surah to this Surah (Al-Fatiha), neither in the Torah, nor in the Gospel, nor in the Psalms, nor even in the Qur'an and it is Umm al-Kitab"*2 which means that it is the basis and origin of all excellence.

In fact, besides referring to the Resurrection, this Surah presents facts concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence, Unity of Attributes, Unity of Divine Acts, and Unity of Worship. It is the essence of the whole meaning of the Qur'an.

It is narrated from Hadrat Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) that: *"All secrets of Allah are in Divine Books; and the contents of all those Divine Books are comprised in the Qur'an; and what is found in the Qur'an is*

condensed in Surah Al-Al-Fatiha, and what is in Al-Fatiha is gathered in /bismillah/, and what is in /bismillah/ is concentrated in /b/, (*the first letter of 'Bismi Allah'*) *..."*[3]

Based on the entirety of great commentators' statements, it is understood that this tradition indicates clearly the importance of both the Holy Qur'an and / bismillah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ in which science and knowledge, from the beginning to the end, is comprised. The interpreter and elucidator of these sciences is the Holy Prophet (S), and after him there are his true vicegerents including Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a).[4]

3. Al-Fatiha, Magnificent Honour of the Prophet (S)

Surah Al-Fatiha, more so than the other Surahs in the Holy Qur'an, was revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) as a great bounty. It stands on a par with the whole Qur'an. The seven verses in the Surah sum up the whole Qur'an:

And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (***verses***) ***and the Grand Qur'an*** (***15:87***).

This meaning is also referred to in a narration from Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) quoting the Prophet's (S) tradition who said: *"Verily, Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed* (*His*) *favours on me particularly for 'The Opening'* (*Al-Fatiha*) *and has positioned it on a par with the whole Grand Qur'an, and surely Fatihat al-Kitab* (*the Opening of the Qur'an*) *is the dearest* (*item*) *in the treasures of the 'Arsh,* (*Throne of Heaven*)*".*[5]

4. The Importance of Its Recitation

The recitation of this Surah, because of its extreme importance, is frequently emphasized in Islamic traditions and narrations.

As for its virtue, it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) that: *"The reward of any Muslim who recites the Surah 'Opening', is like that of a person who has recited two thirds of the Qur'an, and so much reward would he receive as if he has given every believing Muslim, man or woman, a free will offering".*[6]

5. The Titles of the Surah

There are ten titles given to this Surah, as taken from Islamic narrations and books, thus: *Fatihat al-Kitab, Umm al-Kitab, Umm al-Qur'an, Sab 'al-Mathani, Al-Wafiyah, Al-Kafiyah, Ash-Shafiyah, Al-Asas, As-Salat, and Al-Hamd.*[7]

Surah Al-Fatiha - Verse 1

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

***In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful* (*1:1*).**

Commentary

It is a custom among most people of the world to recite the name of one of their great and very beloved personalities that the worthiness of their work might be elevated. That is, they relate that work to that personality from the very beginning of their endeavour.

Among all beings, the One Who is eternal is only Allah, and, therefore, everything and every activity should begin with His Holy Name. It should be enveloped in His Light, and help should be always asked only from Him. So, in the first verse of the Qur'an, we recite ***'Bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim'*, (*In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*).** This action should not be done only with the tongue, but it should be done truly and meaningfully, because this kind of connection with Him sets work in the right direction and keeps it far from any deviation. For this very reason, such a work will certainly be successful and blessed. The Holy Prophet (S), in a tradition, has said: *"Any important work that begins without mentioning / bismillah /, will remain in valid"*[8]

After narrating this tradition, Hazrat Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) added: *"For every action that a person wants to do, he / she should recite / bismillah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ which means that he / she begins the action with the Name of Allah, and every action that begins with the Name of Allah is blessed".*[9]

On the excellence and importance of / bismi Allah/, it is narrated from 'Ali Ibn Musa ar-Ridha' ('a), who has said thus: *"(The holy phrase)'Bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim' is closer to 'the Exalted Name of Allah' than the pupil is to the white of the eye".*[10]

Again, Ibn Abbas narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) thus: *"As soon as a teacher tells a child to say 'Bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim' and the child says it, Allah records immunity (from fire) for the child, his or her parents and the teacher".*[11]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has said: *"No Holy Book ever came down from heaven but that it began with 'Bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim.'"*[12]

In '*Khisal*' by Shaykh as-Saduq it is cited that Imam al-Baqir ('a) has said: *"...When we begin an action, great or small, it is appropriate to recite / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ and that action may be blessed".*[13]

In short, the stability and permanence of an action is due to this very relation to Allah.

The phrase / bismi Allah/ at the start of the Surah, teaches us to seek the help of Allah from His pure perfect Essence when we begin any action. That is why Allah, the Exalted, in the first verses revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) instructed him to – initiating the proclamation of Islam –perform this great task with the Name of Allah:

Proclaim! in the Name of your Lord… (***96:1***)

and the words of Noah (‘a) to his followers, at the time of the Flood are:

So, he said: ‘Embark ye on the Ark, in the Name of Allah, whether it moves or be at rest!’ (***11:41***).

Again, Soloman’s letter to the Queen of Sheba begins, thus:

It is from Solomon, and is (***as follows***)***: ‘In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful’*** (***27:30***).

Based on the same principle, all of the Surahs of the Holy Qur’an, (except Surah At-Tawba, No. 9) begin with / bismi Allah /[14] in order to pursue the essential aim of guiding man and leading him to prosperity with success, far from getting a taste of defeat.

In any event, when we begin our work with reliance upon the Supreme Power of Allah, Whose Power is above all power, we feel, psychologically speaking, far more powerful; therefore, we may be more confident. We may try more, be more persevering, and more courageous in challenging with difficulties, more hopeful, and, similarly, our intentions and the essence of our actions may be more purified. At the time of beginning any affair, reciting the Name of Allah is the secret to its success.

To whatever extent we further explain this verse, it will still be seen insufficient, because, according to a narration, Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a), regarding the of the verse, talked to Ibn Abbas from the beginning of a night until the next morning, but it was only for the of / b /, the first letter of / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim /.[15]

Explanation

Is the Phrase ‘Bismi Allah’ a Part of Each Surah?

Almost all Islamic scholars unanimously hold the opinion that / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ is, as was stated before, a part of Surah Al-Fatiha and, also, of the other Surahs of the Qur’an (except Surah At-Tawbah, No. 9). In essence, the inclusion of / bismi Allah/ at the beginning of all Surahs of the Holy Qur’an, except the above mentioned one, is a vital piece of evidence bearing witness to this very fact, and the belief is so firm that no change has been made in the Qur’an and nothing has been added to it since it was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (S).

Mu’awiyat ibn ‘Ammar, one of the companions of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a), said that he had asked the Imam whether he should say /bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ at the beginning of Surah Al-Fatiha when he stood for prayer, and he (‘a) replied: *“Yes”*. He had questioned him (‘a), again, as to if he should recite / bismi Allah/ when Surah Al-Fatiha ended and before reciting the next Surah. Then, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) again, answered: *“Yes”*[16]

Dar Qutni, a learned Muslim researcher, according to a sound document narrates from Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) that someone asked him ('a): *"What is As-Sab-al-Mathani* (*Seven Verses*)*?" "It is Surah Al-Hamd",* he ('a) answered. The man said: *"Surah Al-Hamd consists of six verses"*. He ('a) replied: *"Bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim' is also one verse."*[17]

Moreover, Muslims have always preserved the practice of reciting / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ at the beginning of every Surah (except Surah 9) when reciting the Holy Qur'an and it has been proven, on numerous accounts that the Holy Prophet (S) used to recite it, too.

It has been said that Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) was asked to say whether / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim/ was a part of Surah Al-Fatiha. He ('a) answered: *"Yes, the Messenger of Allah used to recite it and considered it one verse* (*of the verses*) *of the Surah, and he said that Fatihat al-Kitab* (*The Opening*) *is the same as 'Sab-al-Mathani'* (*seven verses*)*."*[18]

Allah, the Most Inclusive Name of God

The term / ism / in the phrase / bismi Allah /, as men of letters in Arabic literature say, is originally derived from / sumuww / with the meaning of 'height, elevation'. The reason why any 'noun' is called by an 'appellation' is that after choosing to call a 'noun' by the particular given 'name' (ism), the hidden meaning of the expression appears, and the sense of the 'name' is elevated, therefore forsaking meaninglessness.

In the phrase / bismi Allah /, the word Allah is the most complete and comprehensive name among the Lord's many names. This is because each of Allah's names, which are found in the Holy Qur'an, as well as in other Islamic sources, truly reflects one particular aspect of Allah's Attributes. In other words, the only name that refers to all of His Attributes of Glory and Beauty is Allah. That is why other names are often used as modifiers for the word 'Allah'. For example:

...Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (***2:226***),

refers to Allah's forgiveness;

...Allah heareth and knoweth all things (***2:256***)***,***

shows His being well-acquainted with what is audible and what comes to pass, respectively;

...and Allah Sees well all that you do (***49:18***)

states that He has information on each and every thing that is done by anyone;

Surely Allah is He Who gives (***all***) ***sustenance, the Lord of Power, steadfast*** (***forever***) (***51:58***)

points to His giving sustenance to all creatures and, at the same time, discloses that He is powerful and firm in His actions.

And, finally, Surah Al-Hashr No. 59, reveals some other Attributes of Allah. The terms 'Creator' and 'Evolver' are suggestive of His creativeness and inventiveness, and 'Bestower of Forms' indicates His giving shapes:

***Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace* (*and Perfection*)*, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme:* (*in creating all creatures*)*...* (*59:23*)**

***He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms* (*or Colours*)*, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names...* (*59:24*)**

Another piece of evidence which is a clear indication that this Name, Allah, is all-inclusive is that the acceptance of Faith, in Islam, is possible only by reciting the sentence: / la ilaha illa Allah / **"There is no god, but Allah";** and each of the other phrases such as: 'All-Knowing', or 'Creator' or' Bestower of Sustenance' and the like, alone, is not sufficient enough to proclaim as evidence of Monotheism in Islam. And, that is why in religions other than Islam, the God of Muslims is referred, to as 'Allah', because it is only Muslims who use 'Allah' to refer to, what they do worship.

Allah's General and Specific Mercy

The words ***'ar-Rahman'*** (The Beneficent) and ***'ar-Rahim'*** (The Merciful) are adjectives, both derived from ***'ar-Rahmah'*** (Mercy). The former word, the Beneficent, as it is popularly recognized among some commentators, refers to the General Mercy of Allah which is bestowed upon all creatures; among them are the believers and the disbelievers, good-doers and evildoers. And, as we can see, the Divine bounties of life are distributed everywhere and all human beings enjoy the endless merits therein. This is their sustenance. They draw it out of the abundant blessings encompassing the whole world of existence.

The word ***'ar-Rahim'*** (The Merciful) refers to that Specific Mercy that is endowed upon the believing, obedient servants alone. The believers, because of their true belief, good actions, and faithful active obedience, deserve this special, exclusive mercy, of which the disbelievers are deprived.

The particular fact ratifying this topic is that the word *Rahman* is always used in the Qur'an with the meaning of an infinite form of mercy, which is a sign of its generality, while the word *Rahim* is sometimes used with the meaning of a finite form, which is a sign of its specificity such as:

***...and He is full of Mercy to the Believers.* (*33:43*).**

And it is sometimes used in an infinite form such as in Surah Al-Fatiha.

A narration from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: *"Allah is the God of all* things *and is Beneficent to all His creatures, and He is Merciful, especially, to the believers."*[19]

Therefore, at the moment that we initiate any action, when we begin with the Name of Allah, we must seek His Mercy, General and Specific Mercy, both.

It is interesting to note that this power, which has a broad concept, much the same as gravitational pull, and has the ability to draw hearts closer together, is the very Attribute of Mercy. This Attribute of Mercy is the very means by which men can attain a close relationship with the Creator, also.

That is why true believers, when reciting the holy verse / bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim /, at the beginning of their affairs, detach their hearts from everything else and rely only upon Allah*;* and seek help only from Him, because He is the only One Whose Mercy is 'All-Encompassing' and no creature is deprived of it.

Another fact that can also be understood from / bismi Allah / is that Allah*'s* acts are based on Mercy and, punishment has an exceptional aspect which will not be fulfilled unless there are some exact, clear reasons for it.

When we recite the supplication entitled, 'Jawshan al-Kabir', Section 20 thus: **"O' Lord, Whose Mercy surpasses His Wrath…"** The above point becomes clear.

Human beings should attach importance to mercy and affection and behave accordingly in their daily lives and use violence and harshness only for those times when it is clearly warranted.

We conclude this discussion with a tradition, rich in meaning, from the Holy Prophet (S), who, when commenting on the many different kinds of His All-Encompassing Mercy, said: *"Verily, there are one hundred mercies belonging to Allah, from which, He has sent down to the Earth only one and distributed that one among His creatures. All the mercy and affection they have, issue from it. He, the Merciful, withheld the other 99 for Himself to show mercy upon His servants on the Day of Resurrection".*[20]

Surah Al-Fatiha – Verse 2

الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

(***All***) ***praise is*** (***only***) ***Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds"*** (***1:2***).

Commentary

The World Is Full of His Mercy

After reciting the phrase ***/ bismi Allah ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim /***, to begin the Surah, our first duty is to bring to mind the Great Creator and Cherisher of the world of being, and His endless bounties which have surrounded us thoroughly. In doing so, it is both ***'a guide'*** for us to observe the existence of

Providence and ***'a motive'*** for showing our servitude and worship to Him.

It is ***'a motive'*** because any man, after receiving a gift, wishes to know its giver at once, in order to show his gratitude and thankfulness to him. This quality is in man's innate disposition prompting him to manifest his acknowledgment of Him.

This same quality in man, in discussing the theological motives of ***'the necessity of expressing thankfulness to the Bestower',*** according to what man's nature and rationale leads him to, is considered one of those motives.

And it is ***'a guide'*** to knowing the Lord and His bounties, because the best and the most direct way towards the acknowledgment of the Origin is the study of the secrets of creation, especially, the existence of the bounties of life as related to human beings.

Therefore, perhaps, it is for these two reasons that Surah Al-Fatiha, alongside / bismi Allah/, begins thus:

(***All***) ***praise is*** (***only***) ***Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds*** (***1:2***).

Or, in other words, the verse (***All***) ***praise is*** (***only***) ***Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds*** points to both the Unity of Divine Essence, and the Unity of Divine Attributes and Acts.

Originally, qualifying Allah (SWT), here, with the phrase / rabb al-'alamin / (the Lord of the Worlds) is, in fact, mentioning the reason after stating the claim. It seems that someone has asked why all praise is (only) Allah's and the response is that it is for the reason that He is

The Lord of the Worlds (***1:2***).

This is one of the characteristics of Allah. In another occurrence, the Holy Qur'an says:

He Who has made everything which He has created most good... (***32:7***).

And again, in Surah Hud, it says:

There is no moving creature on the earth but its sustenance dependeth on Allah... (***11:6***).

It is, also, clearly understood from the word /al-hamd/, ***'praise',*** used in this verse, that Allah has created all these bounties and benefits, basically, by His Choice and His Will.

It is interesting to note that by stating the phrase, ***'(All) praise is (only) Allah's',*** it is not only helpful to use it for the commencement of affairs, but, as the Qur'an teaches us, it is also used as a conclusion, like in Surah Yunus, about the good-doers in Heaven, it says:

(***This will be***) ***their cry therein: 'Glory to Thee, O Allah!' And 'Peace' will be their greeting therein!***

and the close of their cry will be: 'Surely, the Praise is Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds!' **(*10:10*).**

Virtue of The Verse

Concerning the virtue of this Holy verse, there is a narration from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) which says that in a tradition from the Prophet (S), he has said: *"When a believing servant says 'The Praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds', such a praise that befits Him and His Rank, the angels are unable to record it. They will be asked by Allah why they did not record the reward of the phrase which the believing servant stated. Then, in response to their not recording the reward, they will ask how it is that they could even understand and estimate the high standard of saying such a phrase which contains the praise befitting and deserving only to Him. Allah, the Exalted, will tell them that they should record the phrase and it would be for Him to endow the servant with the reward of the praise be fitting Him.*[21]

The word / rabb / originally means *'the owner of something who proceeds to train and improve it'.*

This word is absolutely applied to Allah, alone, and if it is applied, in Arabic, for other than Him, it is certainly used in a possessive form, as / rabb ud-dar / *'the owner of the house',* or / rabb us-safinah / *'the owner of the ship'.* In any case, the word, itself, conveys the meaning of *'training'.*

There is another idea mentioned in *Majma' al-Bayan* that says: "/ rabb / means: *'an important person whose orders are obeyed'."* However, it is probable that both meanings refer to the same origin.

The term / 'alamin / is the plural form of / 'alam / *'the world'* and we cite it, here, with the meaning of 'a collection of different creatures with common characteristics or a common time and place'. For example, we say: the world of Man, the world of animals, and the world of plants, or, we say: the world of the East and the world of the West, or: the world of today and the world of yesterday. Therefore, when / 'alam /, which has a plural sense by itself, is used in a plural form, it refers to the 'universe'.

The writer of the *Al-Manar* says that it is narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he has said / 'alamin / means 'peoples', only. Then, the writer adds that the term is used in the Qur'an with the same meaning; for example:

***...that it may be an admonition to all peoples* (*creatures*). (*25:1*).**[22]

It is true that the term / alamin / in many occurrences, in the Qur'an, is used with the meaning of 'peoples', but, sometimes, it is also used with a broader scope of meaning which envelops other creatures; for instance:

***Then Praise be to Allah, Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth, Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds!* (*45:36*).**

And, also, like:

Pharaoh said: 'And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds?' **(*26:23*).**

(*Moses*) *said: 'The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between them…* (*26:24*).

It is interesting that in a narration from Hadrat 'Ali ('a), *as-Saduq* has cited in the book *'Uyun al-Akhbar'*, that he ('a), commenting on the verse, has said: *"(The phrase) / rabb al-alamin / refers to all creatures whether they are inanimate or living".*[23]

There is, of course, no contradiction between these traditions, because, although the meaning of the term / alamin / is very vast, Man is, the most significant being among all creatures of the world, so, he is sometimes especially considered the central point of them, and other creatures are dependent upon him and in his shadow. Therefore, when, in the tradition of the Imam ('a), the term is rendered into 'peoples', the reason is that the main purpose of creation, in this great gathering of beings, is Man.

This point is, also, interesting that some have introduced two forms of / alam / 'the world', 'the great world' (*macrocosm*) and 'the lesser world' (*microcosm*) by which they refer to Man as 'the lesser world', because the entity of a person alone is a collection of different powers which govern 'the great world'. In fact, 'man' is a sample of the whole world. So, Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) in one of his poems, addressing Man, says: *"You think that you are a small body, while (you should know that) you contain 'the great world' (macrocosm) inside you."*[24]

One of the factors that causes us to emphasize the vast meaning of / alam / *'the world',* is that the term has occurred after the phrase /al-hamd-u-lil-lah /, in which we devote all the praise to Allah, only, and, then, we reason our statement with / rabb al-alamin / '*The Lord of the Worlds*'. We say the praise is only Allah*'s* because all perfections, all bounties and all blessings, in this world, belongs to Him, the Lord, the Cherisher.

Surah Al-Fatiha – Verse 3

الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Beneficent, The Merciful **(*1:3*).**

Commentary

The meaning of / ar-rahman / ***'the Beneficent'*** and / ar-rahim / ***'the Merciful',*** together with their broad sense of meaning and the difference between them, was explained at length while commenting on / bismi Allah/, the repetition of which is not required.

A point that should be added to the, here, regarding 'ar-Rahman' and 'ar-Rahim', is that these two

attributes, which are the most significant attributes of Allah, are repeated at least 30 times, every day, in our (5) daily prayers; (twice in Surah Al Fatihah, and once in the Surah we recite after it). In this way, we praise Allah sixty times as being 'Merciful' each day.

This, indeed, is a lesson taught to all human beings more than anything else that they should try to acquire this attribute, and practice it in their daily lives and activities. Moreover, it points to the fact that if we count ourselves among the true, obedient servants of Allah, we should not follow or imitate the manner in which tyrant slave owners use against their servants when dealing with our servants.

The history of slavery indicates that the tyrant owners used to treat their slaves in horrifyingly cruel ways. For example, if a slave moved a little slow in performing services, he would receive harsh punishments: i.e. be whipped, put in chains or fetters, fastened to a mill-stone and forced to turn it, instructed to work in mines, imprisoned in deep, dark, wet holes and, if his faults were greater, he would be hanged.

Another reference in the history of slavery also shows that condemned slaves were put in wild animal cages. If the slave succeeded in staying alive, another animal would be let in on him.

These are some examples of the conduct of some owners with their slaves. But, Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, has mentioned repeatedly, in the Holy Qur'an, that Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful to the servants who are repentant of their disobedience to Him. For example: Surah Az-Zumar says:

Say: 'O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins, for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (***39:53***).

Therefore, the terms 'ar-Rahman' (the Beneficent) and 'ar-Rahim' (the Merciful) used after the phrase / rabb al- alamin / 'the Lord of the Worlds' refer to the idea that, He, with the absolute Power He has, is yet Merciful to all His creatures. This quality, which Allah possesses, attracts His servants to Him and they eagerly say: *'ar-Rahman-ir-Rahim',* (the Beneficent, the Merciful).

It is here that one's attention is drawn to the fact that the behaviour of Allah, the Exalted, toward His creatures is, by far, different from that of masters toward their servants, in particular, during the horrible period of slavery.

Therefore, 'belief' in Allah is the first of the five principles of Islam.

Surah Al-Fatiha - Verse 4

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgement (***1:4***).

Commentary

'Faith in the Resurrection', the Second Principle

In this verse, attention is paid to the second important principle in Islam, i.e. Resurrection and the Hereafter when it says:

Master of the Day of Judgement (***1:4***).

Thus, the focus of the idea of the Origin and End, which is the main foundation of all ethical and social improvements in Man, reaches the peak of perfection.

It is noteworthy, here, that the mastership of Allah, or His Ownership, is pointed out, which illustrates His Sovereignty and Domination over everything and everyone on that Day, when all human beings will attend that Great Court for reckoning, before their real and genuine Master. They will see all their deeds and even their thoughts present without there being aught less than the original or anything forgotten. They will even have to accept their share of responsibility for any customs for which they have merely been the founders of, not necessarily the doers of them.

Allah's Ownership, on that Day, is not similar to our imaginary ownership of that which belongs to us from the things of this world. His Ownership, regarding the world of existence, is the real ownership. It is the special dependence of creatures on the Lord and their being in need of Him. If the flow of His blessings ceased even for a single moment, it would cause them to perish altogether.

In other words, this ownership is the consequence of His Creatorship and Divinity. He, Who creates beings, gives them life every moment and cherishes them, protects them and guides them, is the real master of all creatures. As a matter of fact, He is the only Ruler of all powers in the world of existence.

There is no doubt that Allah is 'The Lord of the Worlds'. The question to be raised here is this: 'Is not Allah the Absolute Owner of this world? 'Versus our statement to this effect that 'He is the Master of the Day of Judgement'. The answer to this question lies in the fact that the '*Ownership of* Allah*',* though it comprises both worlds, enjoys further manifestation in the Hereafter. This is because all material ties and imaginary ownerships are cut off (in the Hereafter), and no one has anything of his or her own on That Day. Even intercession, if ever achieved, is by Allah*'s* command, as the Qur'an says about the Reckoning Day:

(***It will be***) ***the Day when no soul shall have power*** (***to do***) ***aught for another: For the command, that Day, will be*** (***wholly***) ***with Allah.*** (***82:19***).

In other words, occasions arise, in this world, when one helps another through his or her speech, money, power, advocates, plans, designs, and so on. On That Day (the Hereafter), however, certainly not a single trace of such affairs will exist. Therefore, when people are asked:

Whose will be the Dominion that Day? (***40:16***)

they answer:

…that of Allah, the One, the Almighty (***The Subduer of all***)***!*** (***40:16***)***.***

This is also an answer to those who reject the idea that when Allah is the Owner of everything why, then, He is called the ***'Master of the Day of Judgement'.***

Man, with no belief in the Hereafter and the Day of Reckoning, would have the potential to be the most immoral of beings, the biggest tyrant committing the worst and the most hideous crimes, for, in his view, there is not anyone to question or punish him if he is clever enough not to get caught and, with such characteristics, sometimes, it would be so terrible or impossible for other fellow-creatures to continue their lives in this world. Therefore, faith in life after death and the Day of Judgement, which is an essential part of Islam, like prayer, is very helpful in controlling men against committing sins.

Emphasizing the Ownership of Allah on the Day of Judgement has this effect, too, that it stands against the disbelief of disbelievers in the Hereafter. It is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an that Faith in Allah has been a common belief even among disbelievers in the Age of Ignorance. Surah Luqman says about them:

If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth. They will certainly say: 'Allah' (***31:25***)

while they did not accept the speech of the Prophet (S) about the Resurrection:

The Unbelievers say (***in ridicule***)***: 'Shall we point out to you a man that will tell you, when ye are all scattered to pieces in disintegration, that ye shall*** (***then be raised***) ***in a New Creation?*** (***34:7***)***.***

Has he invented a falsehood against Allah, or has a spirit (***seized***) ***him?'…*** (***34:8***)***.***

A tradition from Imam Sajjad ('a) says: *"When 'Ali Ibn il-Husayn, ('a) began reciting* ***'Master of the Day of Judgement'****, he repeated it so many times that he was at the point of losing his life".*[25]

The phrase / yaum-id-din /, is repeated more than ten times in the Qur'an, exclusively with the meaning of 'the Hereafter':

And what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is? (***82:17***)***.***

Again, what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is? (***82:18***)***.***

The Day on which no soul shall have aught for (***another***) ***soul, and the command that Day shall be*** (***wholly***) ***Allah's*** (***82:19***)***.***

The phrase / yaum–id–din / is used in the sense of 'the Day of Judgement', for 'That Day' is the day of rewards; and / din / in Arabic philology means: ***'reward, recompense'.*** The most evident procedure fulfilled in the Hereafter is the procedure of paying rewards or inflicting punishments. On That Day, the curtains will be removed and the deeds of all will be reckoned, precisely, and everyone shall reap the fruit of his own actions, be they good or evil.

Imam as–Sadiq (ʿa) said in a tradition that the Day of Judgement is '*The Reckoning Day'.*[26]

It is also noteworthy to mention that some commentators believe that **'Resurrection'** is called /yaum–ud–din/ because on That Day, everyone is recompensed for his own religion, if he has followed it accordingly.

Surah Al–Fatiha – Verse 5

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Thee (***alone***) ***do we worship and of Thee*** (***only***) ***do we seek help*** (***1:5***).

Commentary

Man in the Presence of Allah

Here, this verse is a start for a servant to plea and ask his needs from Allah. In fact, from here on, the tone of the statements changes. The former verses were the praise and attributes of Allah, and the statement of Faith in His Pure Unity, consisting of a confession to the belief in the Day of Resurrection. But, from this verse on, it seems that the servant, with that firm foundation of Belief in the knowledge of Allah, sees himself in front of Him, the Pure Essence. He addresses Him and speaks, firstly, about his own worship for Him and, then, about His help which he seeks from Him. Thus, he says:

Thee (***alone***) ***do we worship and of Thee*** (***only***) ***do we seek help*** (***1:5***).

In other words, when the concepts of the former verses settle in one's soul, and his entire entity is enlightened with the Light of Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds, and when he recognizes His *'General Mercy'* and *'Specific Mercy',* the individual transforms into a complete person from the point of 'belief' and 'Faith'. The prime fruit of this deep belief in monotheism, for a person, in one respect, is to be a pure true servant of Allah, free from any idol and idolatry, far from tyrants and lusts; and, on the other hand, to seek help only from His Pure Essence.

In fact, the former verses state the Unity of Essence and Attributes, while, here, the statement is regarding the Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts.

'Unity of Worship' means that we acknowledge no person or thing worthy of worship other than Allah, Whose commands alone do we obey and Whose laws only do we follow, avoiding any kind of servitude and submission to other than Him, the Pure Essence.

'Unity of Acts' means that we clearly recognize Him as the only real 'Author of Causes' in the world. It does not mean that we would refuse the world of 'cause' and be neglectful of searching for the causes of things, but it means that we would believe that any effect from any cause is under His command. It is He Who has given heat to fire, light to the sun, and vivacity to water.

The outcome of this belief is that one relies on Allah alone, and knows that all authority and power are His only. In his view, other than Him is powerless, mortal and perishable.

Allah is the only Essence to be relied on and worshipped. It is only He Who is deserving of man's reliance for everything.

This kind of thought and belief sets man apart from anyone or anything else and joins him only to Allah. He obeys Allah even when he pursues after 'the world of ways and means', i.e. he sees the Power of Allah, the Cause of causes, in control of the means.

This belief elevates the soul of man so high and the scope of his thought so broad that it reaches eternity and becomes free from any limited circumstances, in so far as, Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin, the Master of the Virtuous, 'Ali ('a), regarding Allah, says: *"I worship you neither for the fear of the Fire (of Your Hell) nor for the desire of Your Paradise, but I found You fit for worshipping and I worshipped You."*[27]

Explanation

Allah – The Only Site of Reliance

According to the Arabic literature, when the object of the verb precedes its subject, in that language, the meaning of exclusiveness is understood, and, here, the word / iyyaka / ***'Thou'*** has preceded the words / na'bud / ***'we worship'*** and / nasta'in / ***'we seek help'*** which indicates exclusiveness in which its result is the very Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts that were explained before. Even in our own worship, we need His help for which we must ask Him. We may be involved in self-conceit, deviation, hypocrisy and similar things, which destroy our worshipping and servitude totally. Then, in all affairs and activities, our full attention should be exclusively on Allah, the Exalted.

In other words, this, in itself, is one of the stages of monotheism, a high stage of it, which is rendered into 'monotheism in speculation'. That is, one should always and in all circumstances, think of Allah only. He should rely exclusively on Allah. He should fear nothing but Allah; and he should trust Allah only. He should see nothing save Allah; he should want nothing save Allah; and he should love none save Allah. As the Qur'an says:

***Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his* (*one*) *body…* (*33:4*).**

The Social Aspect of Worship

The pronoun 'we', which is in the plural form, used in terms /na'bud/ ***'we worship'*** and / nasta'in / ***'we seek help'****,* and in the next verses, shows that worship, especially prayer, is based on 'plural' and community.

The servant must consider himself among the community even when he is standing in front of Allah for invocation, much less during his other daily activities.

Thus, from the point of view of the Qur'an, any individualism, solitariness, and the like are not accepted in Islam. Particularly, the ritual prayer, from the prayer call: / hayya 'alas- salat / *'hasten to the prayer',* which is an invitation to initiate prayer, to Surah Al-Hamd at the beginning of the prayer, and the term / as-salamu alaykum... / *'peace be on you all...'* at the end of the prayer, all are statements of verification to the concept that this worship basically has a social aspect; viz, it ought to be performed as a congregational prayer. It is true that the prayer performed individually is also accepted in Islam, but personal worship is considered as the secondary degree.

We Ask Allah for Help in Confronting Forces

We have to confront different forces in this world, both the forces in nature and our innate, or inborn natural forces. To be able to challenge with these destructive, misleading factors, we need to be helped. Hence, we shelter under the protective umbrella of Allah. We get up every morning and repeat the verse / 'iyyaka na'budu wa 'iyyaka nasta'in /

***Thee* (*alone*) *do we worship and of Thee* (*only*) *do we seek help* (*1:5*)**

to confess our servitude to Allah and to ask His Pure Essence help to make us successful in this great challenge. We do the same in the evening before we go to bed. We get up in the morning with His remembrance, and we go to bed in the evening with His remembrance, and each time we ask help from His Pure Essence. What an excellent state this is for the person who is in this stage of Faith! He never bows to any tyrant. He never loses himself for the attraction of material gain, and as the Qur'an reveals about the Prophet of Islam (S), saying:

***…Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are* (*all*) *for the Cherisher of the Worlds* (*6:162*).**

Therefore, the recitation of this Holy Surah may provide the solution to all problems in our lives. It has plenty of properties which can bring us to safety. An example is from a narration cited by one of the companions of the Prophet (S). He said that in one of the battles, he was with the Messenger of Allah (S). When the fight became difficult, he (S) lifted his head and said:

***O' Master of the Day of Judgement! Thee* (*alone*) *do we worship and of Thee* (*only*) *do we seek help* (*1:5*).**

At that moment the army of enemies was defeated and (many of them) were killed while the Prophet (S) and Muslims won.[28]

It is stated in another narration: *"When a difficulty arises for a believing servant, and he recites this Holy verse, it will become easy for him".*[29]

Surah Al-Fatiha -Verse 6

اهدِنَــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ

***Guide us* (*O' Lord*) *on the Straight Path* (*1:6*).**

Commentary

After confessing his obedience and servitude to Allah, reaching the state of worship, and asking for help from Him, the first thing that the servant seeks is His guidance to the **'Straight Path',** the path of the righteous, the path of Justice, and the path of Faith and good deeds. So, he asks the Lord, Who has bestowed on him all of these bounties, to give him the bounty of 'guidance', too.

Such a man, in the above stated condition, is a believing one who is acquainted with the Lordship of his Lord, but it is possible, too, that suddenly he would cease to receive this bounty because of some component of wickedness, and, consequently, he would stray from the Right Path.

Therefore, he must ask his Lord, at least ten times a day, to protect him from any kind of aberration.

Moreover, this 'Straight Path', which is the very Divine creed, has some stages. All people are not on the same level of spiritual preparedness necessary for attaining these stages. Whatever stages a person attains, there are still some higher stages above them that a believing servant might ask Allah to guide him to reach.

Here, a question arises: *"Why must we always ask Allah for guidance to 'the Straight Path', as if we are being misguided?".*

Besides, supposing the statement is true about us, the ordinary believers, but what about the Holy Prophet and sinless Imams ('a) who were the examples of complete human beings? In answer to this question, we may say:

Firstly, the fact is that Man is liable to deviate from the Right Path with each step that he takes as he is walking along the path of guidance. So, he should rely on Allah and ask Him to keep him firm on the

'Straight Path'.

We must not forget that our existence, our being, and all the bounties which always come to us, are from His Origin. To clarify the matter, we cite a simple example:

All creatures, including human beings, (from one point of view) resemble an electric lamp. We see that the light of a lamp, when it is on, appears to be constant and monotonous. The reason is that the electrical current flows constantly from a generator to the lamp. The generator continuously produces some new electrical power, a part of which reaches the lamp by some connective wires. Our being is similar to the lamp. Although it appears as a sustained being, it is, in fact, a continually renewed being that flows ceaselessly to us from the Original Being, the Bountiful Creator.

Therefore, as the continually new being reaches us, we need constant new guidance, too. It is natural that if something wrong or some barriers manifest themselves in our spiritual connective wires with Allah; the vices, injustice, wrong doings, etc., will disrupt our connection with the Origin of guidance. At that moment, we may deviate from the' Straight Path'.

We ask Allah that these barriers be removed and not obstruct our way that we may remain steadfast along the 'Straight Path'.

Secondly, receiving 'guidance' is the same as travelling the path of 'development' along which man can gradually promote from lower degrees to higher and higher ones.

We also know that the path of development is endless and continues towards 'infinity'. So, it is no wonder that even the prophets and sinless Imams ('a) ask Allah to guide them to the 'Straight Path', because the Absolute Perfection is Allah and all of us, without any exception, are on the path of perfection, then it is acceptable that they, too, ask Him for higher promotions.

Do we not often send greetings to the Holy Prophet (S) by the special formula of 'Salawat'? Does 'Salawat' not have the meaning of requesting new blessings from Allah for Prophet Muhammad and his descendants (S)?

Is it not expressed in the Qur'an regarding the Prophet (S) who used to say:

...O' my Lord! advance me in knowledge* (*20:114*)*?

Does the Holy Qur'an not say:

***And Allah doth advance in guidance those who seek guidance...?* (*19:76*)**

And, again, does it not say:

But to those who receive guidance, He increases the* (*light of*) *Guidance, and bestows on them their piety and restraint* (*from evil*) (*47:17*)*?

This explanation makes clear the answer to the question regarding the benediction which we recite for the Prophet and the sinless Imams (‘a) by which We beseech Allah, in fact, for a higher and better position for them all (‘a).

Here are two traditions which make the above idea clearer: Amir Al-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) commenting on the verse

***Guide us* (*O’ Lord*) *on the Straight Path* (*1:6*)**

says: *“It means: ‘(O’ Lord) continue bestowing Your blessings on us as You did during the days passed by which we succeeded to obey You, so that we can obey You in the future of our lives, too’”.*[30]

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) has said about the verse: *“It means: ‘(O’ Lord) show us the way which ends in Your love, leads us to Your Paradise, and prevents us from following our destructive desires or our own wrong and destroying decisions’”*[31]

What is the ‘Straight Path’?

According to what is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur’an, the ‘Straight Path’ is the same as the ‘Monotheistic Creed’; the religion of Truth and the belief in the instructions of Allah, as Surah Al-An’am says:

***Say: ‘Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, - a religion of right, - the path* (*trod*) *by Abraham the true in faith, and he* (*certainly*) *joined not gods with Allah’* (*6:161*).**

Here, ‘a religion of right’ and ‘the theistic path of Abraham (‘a) as the true faith’, in which he called on no god but Allah, are introduced as the ‘Straight Path’. This shows the belief aspect.

But Surah Yasin says:

***Did I not enjoin on you, O’ ye children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he is to you an enemy avowed?* (*36:60*).**

***And that ye should worship Me,* (*for that*) *this is the Straight Way?* (*36:61*)**

These verses, here, point to the ‘practical’ aspects of the ‘religion of truth’. They urge us not to commit any Satanic deed or any wrong action.

Clinging to Allah, the Qur’an says, is the key to reaching the ‘Straight Path’:

***…Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight* (*3:101*).**

It is necessary to mention this point that the ‘Straight Path’ is always only one way, not more than that, because the shortest distance between two points is always only one straight line.

Therefore, when the Qur'an says that the 'Straight Path' is the very true belief in the Divine religion with its moral and practical aspects; it is because it is the shortest route to a spiritual connection with Allah.

And it is also for this same reason that 'the religion of truth' is not more than one:

The Religion before Allah is Islam (***submission to His Will***) *...* (***3:19***).

Later it will be made evident that 'Islam' has a vast meaning which envelops all the monotheistic religions that were lawful at their own times but were nullified by the new one. Thus, it clarifies that all different commentaries that commentators have cited on the matter, i.e. the 'Straight Path', refer, indeed, to the same thing.

Islam, the Pure Unity, Qur'an, the Prophet, and his vicegerents ('a), are some explications that commentators have offered for the meaning of the 'Straight Path'. All of the stated explications refer to the Divine religion in the aspects of ***'Faith'*** and ***'practice'.***

Also, all of the various narrations and traditions cited on the subject in the Islamic sources, each of which points to a separate dimension of the question, in substance, refer to one essence. Some examples are as follows:

It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who has said: *"The 'Straight Path' is the path of prophets and they are those on whom Allah hath bestowed His Grace".*[32]

Here are three traditions from Imam as-Sadiq ('a), who, when commenting on this verse, said: *"It is the 'way' and the 'cognizance' of Imamate".*[33]

Again, in another tradition, he ('a) says: *"By Allah, we (Ahl al-Bayt) are the 'Straight Path'".*[34]

Another tradition from the same Imam ('a) says: *"The 'Straight Path' is Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a)".*[35]

Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Al-Tha'labi, a Sunni scholar, has narrated from Abu-Buraydah Al-Aslami, who was one of the companions of the Holy Prophet (S), that he said: *"The 'Straight Path' is the path of Muhammad and his descendants".*[36]

This means that their path is based on the doctrine of Islam which consists of the belief in: 'Oneness of Allah', 'Justice', 'Prophethood', 'Imamate', and the 'Hereafter'. There is no doubt that the path of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is the' Straight Path', and that adhering to it causes prosperity and salvation, while pursuing other than that leads to loss and injury.

Ibn il-Maqazali has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who has said: *"The example of my household (Ahl al-Bayt) is similar to the Ark of Noah. He who embarked it was rescued (from drowning and destruction), but he who refused it drowned (and perished)".*[37]

Other traditions narrated from Ahl al-Bayt ('a) also confirm the concept. In addition, the well-known

tradition ‘Thaqalayn’ from the Holy Prophet (S) is another good clear witness to the matter, too. It says: *“I leave behind me amidst you two Great things; should you be attached to these two, never, never shall you become astray: the ‘Book’ of* Allah (*the Holy Qur’an*) *and my progeny, my ‘Ahl al-Bayt’.”*[38]

As was previously stated, it is certain that the Holy Prophet (S), Hadrat ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a) and all of the other infallible Imams (‘a) invited people to the theistic religion of Allah, an invitation to Faith and practice in truth, which elevates Man to the climax of ability, guidance, dignity, and human excellences.

By the way, it should not be neglected that there are two kinds of guidance: ‘Divine Guidance’ and ‘Religious Guidance’.

‘Divine Guidance’ is the human intelligence bestowed on a person by Allah, which recognizes the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, gain and loss, felicity and wretchedness, virtue and vice, and so on. It is, in fact, the inner messenger of a person.

‘Religious Guidance’ means that Allah sends prophets, Divine Books and legislation to guide Man to all merits of this world and the next, as well as making him aware of the injuries and damages of the two worlds. Of course, when Man is guided by the above guidance and acts accordingly, he will be worthy of receiving the blessings of the next world; this is made possible through the development of the soul by acquiring knowledge, good habits, and commendable moral qualities in which state he will certainly attain the happiness of this world and that of the next, together with the infinite grace of Allah.

‘Intellect’ is called a ‘guide’ in that it enlightens man as to what is right and what is wrong. The Prophets (‘a), Imams (‘a), and scholars are called ‘Guides’, too, because they guide the human race to the salvation and felicity in both worlds. But really, Allah is the main Supreme Guide, and these are the means appointed for the guidance of Man.

Surah Al-Fatiha – Verse 7

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not (***the path***) ***of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor*** (***of those***) ***gone astray*** (***1:7***).

Commentary

Two Paths of Deviation

This verse is, indeed, a clear illustration of the ‘Straight Path’, which was dealt with in the previous verse. It says that the person asks Allah to guide him onto the path of those on whom He has blessed with many kinds of bounties; (such as the blessings of guidance, success, the leadership of people of truth,

knowledge, good actions, holy wars and martyrdom); not those who deserved His wrath because of their wrong doings, nor those who neglected the right path and went astray.

***The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not* (*the path*) *of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor* (*of those*) *gone astray* (*1:7*).**

In fact, we are not familiar with the method of guidance, so the Lord's command, in this verse, is that we ask for the path of the prophets, good doers and all of those to whom Allah has extended His bounties, blessings and favours.

It also warns us that there are two deviated paths in front of us: the path of those inflicted with His wrath, and the path of those gone astray.

Explanation

1) Who are 'Those Upon Whom Allah Has Bestowed His Bounties'?

Surah An-Nisa has introduced these people, thus:

***All who obey Allah and the Apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah – of the prophets* (*who teach*), *the Sincere* (*lovers of Truth*), *the Witnesses* (*who testify*), *and the Righteous* (*who do good*). *Ah! What a beautiful Fellowship!* (*4:69*).**

As it demonstrates, this verse introduces the people on whom the bounties and Mercy of Allah are bestowed. They are four groups; the Prophets, the Sincere, the Witnesses, and the Righteous. These four states may refer to an idea that: for the attainment of a sound, progressive and faithful society, prophets and divine leaders should form the foundation.

After the prophets are the sincere truthful missionaries and preachers whose words attest to their actions by extend the prophets' missions throughout their societies.

Following this period of the formation of these structural states, naturally, some evil-minded individuals, who serve as barriers on the path of truth, may appear in the way. There should be some others to stand against them. In this struggle a few of these defenders of truth may be gifted with martyrdom, whose blood would then water the tree of 'Theism'.

The fruit of these struggles and devotions is yielded as 'the Righteous' with whom the society can be pure, efficient, and abounding with spirituality.

Therefore, in the Holy Surah Al-Fatiha (The Opening), we are encouraged to repeatedly ask Allah, during the day and night, that we be led on the path of these previously mentioned four groups, and, obviously at each time, we must emphasize with sincere effort and endeavour, on one of these four states more than the others in order to perform our duty and mission well.

2) Who Are the Last Two Groups in This Verse?

The separation of these two groups from each other indicates that each group has some defining characteristics.

To make distinction between these two groups, there are three commentaries:

A) From the application of these two words in the Qur'an, it is so understood that / maghdhubi 'alayhim / ***'those inflicted with His Wrath'*** are in a worse condition than / dallin / ***'those gone astray'.*** In other words, 'those gone astray' are the ordinary misguided and /maghdhubi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with 'His Wrath' are the misguided who are obstinate or hypocritical. And, for these two very reasons, the Curse and Wrath of Allah have been cited towards them in frequent occurrences in the Qur'an. The followings are some instances:

...But such as open their breast to Unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah... (***16:106***).

And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and Polytheists, men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil; the Wrath of Allah is on them. He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination (***48:6***).

However, this group, i.e. ***'those inflicted with His Wrath'*** were those who, besides their unbelief, pursued the path of obstinacy and enmity against Allah, and whenever they could, they even injured the Divine leaders and prophets (S).

As Surah Aali Imran says:

...They draw on themselves Wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (***the tent of***) ***destitution. This because they rejected the Signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right; this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds*** (***3:112***).

B) Some of the commentators believe that /dallin/ ***'those gone astray'*** refers to the misguided of the Christians; and /maghdhubi 'alayhim/ ***'those inflicted with His Wrath'*** refers to the misguided of the Jews.

This idea was formed because of the particular responses that these two groups showed in reply to the invitation to Islam. For, as the Qur'an has clearly pointed out in different verses, the misguided Jews used to show a special grudge and enmity against the invitation of Islam, though, at the beginning, their scholars and learned men were the bearers of the glad tidings of Islam. Very soon, though, under the effect of deviation of thought, belief and notion, and, also, because their financial gains were being endangered, they became the most obstinate enemies of Islam and they did whatever evil they could against the progression of Islam and Muslims[39].

Therefore, to render these people as 'those inflicted with His Wrath' seems very correct.

But, the misguided of the Christians, who upon encountering with Islam were not so grudging, but were misled because of their misperception of the Divine religion and therefore refusing the Truth, were rendered into / dallin / 'those gone astray'. They believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost instead of clinging to true Monotheism, the worship of Allah. This is, in itself, one of the greatest examples of 'astray' and 'aberration'.

In the Islamic traditions, too, /maghdhubi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' are interpreted as the Jews, and /dallin/ ' those gone astray' as the misguided of the Christians. The foundation of this interpretation is the same as was mentioned in the above.

C) It is also probable that /dallin/ 'those gone astray' refers to those who are misguided but do not insist on making others go astray, while /maghdhubi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' refer to those who both 'go astray' and' lead others astray'. They try vigorously to change others to become like themselves.

The references to this meaning are the verses that introduce the persons who obstruct the way of guidance of others and are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as 'those who would hinder (men) from the Path of Allah'. Surah Ash-Shura says:

***But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted, futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord: on them is Wrath, and for them will be Penalty terrible* (*42:16*).**

Other traditions have also been cited concerning the matter, including a narration from Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a). It says: *"Everyone who has disbelieved in* Allah*, on him is Wrath, and he is astray from His path".*[40]

In *'Ma'ani'* a book of traditions, it is narrated from the Prophet (S) who said: *"Shi'ah* (*the followers*) *of 'Ali* (*'a*) *are those on whom* Allah *has bestowed the bounty of 'Wilayat' love of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib* (*'a*)*; His Wrath is not on them, and they are not on the wrong path".*[41]

Supplication

O' Lord! Count us not among 'those inflicted with Your Wrath' and 'those gone astray', but consider us among true believers, the followers of the school of Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*).

O' Lord! Guide us on the Straight Path in our every circumstance and in all our affairs! O' Lord! We thank you for this Divine blessing and say: "Praise belongs to Allah (*alone*) *Who set us among those holding steadfast to the love of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib and the other immaculate Imams* (*'a*)*."*

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1. Surah at-Tawbah, Repentance.
2. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 17.

3. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 28 and Masabih al-Anwar Vol. 1, p. 435.
4. Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 90.
5. Al-Burhan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Vol. one, p. 21; and Atyab al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 83.
6. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 17.
7. Rauh al-Jinan, Abd al-Futuh Razi, Vol. 1, p. 16.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 76, chapter 58, p. 305 (according to 'Tafsir Al-Bayan', Vol. 1, p. 461).
9. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 76, chapter 58.
10. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 18.
11. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 18.
12. Al-Mahasin by Al-Barqi p. 40 and Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 92, p. 234.
13. Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 70 and Al-Mizan, Vol. 1, p. 26 (Persian version).
14. The phrase / bismi Allah / is used as a contraction of / bismi Allah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim /.
15. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 28.
16. Al-Kafi, Vol. 3, p. 312.
17. Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, p. 136.
18. Atyab al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 92.
19. Kafi, Tawhid by as-Saduq, and Ma'ani al-Akhbar (according to Al-Mizan).
20. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 21.
21. Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 32, tradition 8; and Tafsir Furat al-Kufi; Vol. 1, p. 52.
22. Al-Manar, Vol. 1, p. 51.
23. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 17.
24. From the collection of Poems of Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a), p. 175.
25. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 19.
26. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 24; and Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 24.
27. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 72, p. 186.
28. Kanz al-'Ummal, Vol. 4, p. 36 (taken from Tafsir al-Baqawi, and 'Amal al-Yawm wa al-Laylah).
29. Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Commentary, Vol. 1, p. 114.
30. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 2, p. 254; and Tafsir us-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 72.
31. Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 484.
32. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 20, Tradition 86.
33. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 21, tradition 88.
34. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 21, tradition 89.
35. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 21, tradition 94.
36. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 24, p. 16 and Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 116.
37. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 23, p. 124, tradition 50.
38. Ihqaq al-Haqq, Vol. 9, pp. 309- 375.
39. Even today, Zionism and Zionists hold the same position regarding the manner in which they treat Islam and Muslims.
40. Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 74.
41. Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 32, tradition 8; and Tafsir Furat al-Kufi, Vol. 1, p. 52.

[1] [1]

SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah – Chapter 2 – Introduction

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Surah Al-Baqarah

(**The Cow**)

No. 2 (286 Verses)

Contents of the Surah

This Surah contains 286 verses, rendering it the longest Surah in the Holy Qur'an. It is indisputable that this Surah was not revealed all at once, but partially and in increments as necessitated by the various Islamic social circumstances and conditions found at different times in Medina. But the fact is that the inclusiveness of this Surah from the point of Islamic doctrine in Faith and many practical issues (social, political, economic, and religious) is not deniable, for, there are various subjects discussed in it, including the followings:

1. There are some discussions about Monotheism and gaining knowledge of Allah, especially by way of studying the mysteries of creation.

2. There are many statements about the Resurrection and life after death with a few tangible examples, like the story of Abraham ('a) and how the birds became restored to life, and the story of Ezra.

3. There are some facts about the inimitability of the Qur'an and the significance of this Heavenly Book.

4. There are long discussions and explanations concerning the Jews and hypocrites and their peculiar positions against Islam and the Qur'an, evidenced by their various mischievous hindrances against them.

5. There are some narrations about the history of the Great Prophets, including Abraham (‘a) and Moses (‘a) in particular.

6. There are some passages that contain a few Islamic rules related to varying subjects, such as: prayers, fasting, Holy War on the path of Allah, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the change of the Qiblah (the direction of prayer) from Jerusalem to Mecca, marriage and divorce, commerce, debt, and a great many of the ordinances concerning usury. Donation for the sake of Allah is abundantly discussed. The problem of retaliation, the banning of different kinds of forbidden meat, and also gambling and wine drinking are discussed, in addition to a few other ordinances related to the subjects of writing wills, testaments, and the like.

The appellation ‘*Al-Baqarah*’ (the Cow), the title of this Surah, is taken from the story of the Israelites’ Cow, mentioned in verses 67 to 73 of this Surah, whose description will be explained later in this very commentary (on pages 208 to 213).

The Virtue of Studying This Surah

There are some significant traditions and narrations on the virtue of studying this Surah, cited in Islamic literature, including the followings:

The Late Tabarsi has so cited in *Majma’ al-Bayan* that once the Prophet (S) was asked: “*Which Surah of the Qur’an is the best*?*”* He (S) answered: “*Al-Baqarah”*. They asked: “*Which verse of the Surah* (*is the best*)*?”* He replied: *“Ayat al-Kursi, the Verse of the Throne’* (*2:255*)*”*.[1]

The superiority of this Holy Surah is, apparently, due to its comprehensiveness, and the preference of the ‘Verse of the Throne’ (2:255) is because of its special monotheistic content, which will be dealt with later in this commentary.

It is not contrary to the fact that some other Surahs of the Qur’an are considered superior in other aspects. All the Surahs of the Qur’an have been considered from different points of view.

Again, it is narrated by ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn (‘a) that the Prophet (S) said: “*He who recites the first four verses of Surah Al-Baqarah, the ‘Verse of Throne’* (*2:255*) *with its next two verses* (*2:256, 2:257*) *together with the last three verses of the Surah, will not meet any trouble in himself; in his family members, and in his wealth; and Satan will not approach him, and he* (*having paid attention to the Qur’an in his life*) *will not forget the Qur’an”*.[2]

Also, ‘Ubayy Ibn Ka’b quotes from the Holy Prophet (S) thus: *“He who recites this Surah* (*Al-Baqarah*)

will be encompassed by the bounties of Allah and His Mercy; and He will reward him as much as that of a person who has fought fearlessly on the path of Allah for one year".[3]

Then, the Messenger of Allah (S) added that Muslims should study this Surah, know it, and do it accordingly in order to be benefited by the Mercy of Allah in this world and the next.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: *"He who recites Al-Baqarah and 'Aali Imran, these two Surahs will come above his head on the Day of Judgement like two clouds similar to two umbrellas,* (and *will protect him from the heat of That Day*)*".*[4]

Here, it is necessary to mention the important fact that those rewards, virtues and significant compensations that have been cited for studying the Qur'an or some special Surahs and verses of the Qur'an never meant that one simply should be contented with the fact that one has recited them as invocations.

On the contrary, the recitation of the Qur'an is for understanding, and understanding is for contemplation, and contemplation is for action.

As a matter of fact, every virtue, which is mentioned for a Surah or a verse, corresponds very much with the contents of that Surah or verse. For example, among the virtues of reciting Surah An-Nur, No. 24, we see that it says that Allah may protect the person and his children from committing adultery and slander when he perseveres in studying it.

This consequence is because the contents of Surah An-Nur contains some important instructions on resisting sexual deviations; i.e. the instructions advising single persons to hasten to marriage; the instructions about '*cover'* (hijab); the instructions about refraining from ogling and desirous looks; the instruction that forbids spreading any rumours and accusations about others; and, finally, the instruction on executing the punishment for fornication and adultery upon any perpetrators: be they men or women.

It is obvious that when the content of this Surah be observed by the members of a society or a family, the iniquity of adultery will not appear therein. It is the same concerning the verses of Surah al-Baqarah, mentioned above. They are all related to the subject of Monotheism, belief in '*Qayb*' (the Invisible), knowing Allah*,* and resisting evil temptations. So, if a person recites them and observes the instructions in them carefully and from the depths of his soul, he will certainly obtain those virtues.

It is certainly true, however, that the recitation of the Qur'an deserves rewards, but, besides the original and essential rewards given by Allah*,* its effects on personal behaviour will exist only when this recitation is a premise for contemplation and action.

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1. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 26; and Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 32.
2. Thawab al-A'mal (according to the citation of Nur ath-Thaqalayn Vol. 1, p. 36).

3. Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 120; and Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 32.

4. al-Burhan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 52.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 1 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 1-20

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 1-5

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

الم

'Alif 'A', Lam 'L', Mim 'M' **(*2:1*).**

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

This is the **(*True*)** ***Book wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the pious ones*** **(*2:2*).**

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend **(*in charity*)** ***of what We have provided them*** **(*2:3*).**

والَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

and who believe in what has been revealed to you **(*Muhammad*)*, and what has been sent down*** **(*to other apostles*)** ***before you; and of the Hereafter they are certain*** **(*2:4*).**

أُوْلَـئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

They are on (***true***) ***guidance, from their Lord; and they are the ones who are the successful*** (***2:5***).

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 1

الٓمٓ

'Alif 'A', Lam 'L', Mim 'M' (***2:1***).

Commentary

The Abbreviated Letters of the Qur'an

At the beginning of 29 Surahs of the Holy Qur'an, there are several certain abbreviated letters, the Muqatta'at, which seem separate from each other; i.e. they do not form an apparently meaningful word, but wherever they occur, in the Qur'an, the Surah follows immediately with some expressions about the Qur'an and its importance. This in itself indicates that there is a relation between these letters and the origin of the Qur'an. As an example, Surah An-Naml, No. 27, says:

Ta, Sin! These are verses of the Qur'an, a Book that makes (***things***) ***clear*** (***27:1***).

There are, also, many other examples, similar to this one, in the Qur'an.

The abbreviated letters of the Holy Qur'an have always been considered mysterious. In the words of scholars and commentators, the letters that are prefixes to some Surahs, such as ***'Alif 'A' Lam 'L', Mim 'M',*** and the like, are among the 'metaphorical expressions' of the Qur'an. They are secrets that none knows except the Prophet (S) and, after him, his successors ('a) who have left some traditions and narrations which testify to this very matter:

1. Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) said: *"Every book has all elite and the elite of this Book* (*The Qur'an*) *is the 'abbreviated letters'."*[1]

2. It is narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) who said: *'Alif 'A' Lam 'L', Mim 'M', are the letters among the* (*whole*) *letters of the 'Exalted Name' of Allah, which are separated and scattered in the Qur'an and whenever the Prophet and the sinless Imams* ('a) *call Allah by that 'Exalted Name', their prayer will be accepted."*[2]

3. It is narrated from Imam 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn ('a), thus: *"The Quraysh and the Jews refuted the Qur'an and said: 'It is mere magic and he has made it by himself'. So, Allah said: "Alif, Lam, Mim. This is the* (*True*) *Book...', i.e. 'O' Muhammad, this Book that is sent down to you, is made up of the abbreviated letters and 'Alif Lam, Mim are among them. They are the same as the letters of the alphabet that you* (*people*) *use in your words. Bring similar to it if you are genuine'."*[3]

4. It is narrated from Ibn Abbas and ‘Akramah who have said that these letters are the ‘letters of oath’, as well as ‘the Name of Allah’, by which He (SWT) has Sworn.

The reason why Allah has sworn by these letters is, perhaps, for their importance and greatness through which the Glory and Highness of Allah and the secrets of the world of creation are stated. All sciences, from the beginning to the end, daily activities and arrangements of affairs in societies and their communications throughout the world, the development of industries, the trading and commercial activity between people, their marriages, the social laws, regulations, and the jurisprudence of the religions of human beings, all in all, depend on the letters of the alphabet. The transmission of ancient civilizations and cultures from old generations to the later ones has been possible only through transcribing and recording them essentially with the help of the bounty of alphabets. Even this very book, which is the statement of the Divine laws and the description of the Qur’anic concepts, is being published and distributed throughout the world in different languages including the English language, because of the existence of the letters of the alphabet. Furthermore, an oath is usually taken to an important and great subject. These abbreviated letters have such an importance and greatness. Hence, Allah, the Exalted, taking an oath to a letter of the alphabet, says:

***Nun. By the Pen and by the* (*Record*) *which* (*men*) *write* (*68:1*).**

However, there are more than one hundred other traditions on the abbreviated letters of the Qur’an cited by Muslim scholars in many authentic and tradition books.

Another aspect is that some eminent men have said that these letters refer to the idea that this heavenly Book, with such splendour and reputation that it stirs wonder in the great speakers, both Arab and non-Arab, and that has made the men of letters and all others unable to challenge it, is composed of the sort of the very alphabetical letters that are within the reach of everyone. This fact shows that the Qur’an has not been produced by the mind of Man, but it is an absolute revelation and, therefore, none can produce the like of it.

Imam ‘Ali Ibn Musa ar-Ridha’ (‘a) is narrated to have said in a tradition: *“Verily, Allah has sent down this Qur’an narrated by the very letters that all Arabs apply ordinarily”*. And, thus, Allah, Glory be to Him and Highly Exalted is He, says:

***Say, ‘If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support’* (*17:88*).**

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 2

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

***This is the* (*True*) *Book wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the pious ones* (*2:2*).**

Commentary

Following the abbreviated letters, the Surah, referring to the importance of this heavenly Book, says:

***This is the* (*True*) *Book wherein is no doubt…* (*2:2*).**

This meaning may point to the idea that Allah promised His Prophet (S) to send down to him a Book for the guidance of men and now it was done. For, it is a Book wherein is a source of guidance for all truth-seekers, and, these believers, in fact, have no doubt in it.

The Qur'an says that there is no doubt in this Book, and this statement is not a mere claim. It means that the content of the Qur'an has such a style that it, in itself, attests to the authenticity of itself. In other words, the signs of truthfulness, greatness, and firmness together with the depth and synthesis of meanings, the sweetness and elegancy of the words and its stylistic form found in the statements are so evident that no doubt or temptation can interfere and every truth-seeker reaches the limits of certitude.

It is interesting that over the course of time not only the freshness of the Holy Qur'an does not decrease, but, with the progress of science and the secrets of created things being uncovered, the facts of the Holy Qur'an become more manifest. As the international standards of development, science, and industry are raised, the luminosity and resplendence of these verses become more evident.

This is not only a claim but it is a reality that will be dealt with in this very book, Allah-Willing.

What Is Guidance?

The term '*guidance'* is utilized in many occurrences in the Qur'an. In all these cases the root meaning of the word refers to two main kinds of guidance: Divine Guidance and Religious Guidance.

A) Divine Guidance is the guidance that exists in all creatures of the world. (In other words, 'Divine Guidance' means the leadership of Allah upon creatures under the regulation of creation governed by some definite laws and secrets of the world of existence.)

There are some verses in the Holy Qur'an concerning the subject; like the verse where the Qur'an reveals through Moses ('a):

***…Our Lord is He Who gave to each* (*created*) *thing its form and nature, and further, gave* (*it*) *guidance* (*20:50*).**

It can also be said that those who are in lack of Faith are characterized in two groups. The members of the first group are those who generally seek for the truth and hold enough piety in their souls so that wherever they confront the truth they accept it.

The second group is some obstinate, fanatical, lustful people that not only do not seek for the truth but wherever they find it, they try to blow out its light.

It is certain that the Qur'an, or any other heavenly Book, has always been beneficial for the first group, but the second group does not take any advantage from it. Hence, the Qur'an says:

And We send down (***stage by stage***) ***of the Qur'an that which is healing and a mercy unto the believers, but it adds not to the unjust but perdition*** (***17:82***).

However, it is a fact that saline soil does not grow flowers such as hyacinth though it rains a thousand times on it. But, if the land is ploughed, fertilized and prepared for planting, the life-giving droplets of rain will be useful for it.

The land of the self of man is similar to this parable. It should be empty of obstinacy and enmity; otherwise, the seed of guidance will not grow in it. So, Allah qualifies the Qur'an as:

(***The Qur'an is***) ***a guidance to the pious ones.*** (***2:2***)

B) 'Religious Guidance' is introduced by prophets and Divine Books. It is through their teaching and training that man can progress on the path of development. The references to this fact are found abundantly in the Holy Qur'an, including the verse that says:

And We made them Leaders guiding (***men***) ***by Our Command...*** (***21:73***).

Why is Guidance Particular to the Pious Ones?

It is certain that the Qur'an was sent down for the guidance of all human beings. So, the question is that why the guidance is introduced as particular to the 'pious ones'.

The reason is that it is impossible for Man to take benefit from the guidance of the Divine Books unless he attains some degrees of submission and kindles the light of piety in his self.

Piety in Lexicon and Religion

The term / taqwa /, philologically, is derived from / wiqayah / ***'to protect from what harms'.*** Allah, the Exalted, says:

...save yourselves and your families from a fire... (***66:6***).

Then, piety, in this sense, is 'the protection of oneself from what one fears.'

And, in religion, the pious are 'people who preserve their selves from what harms them in the Hereafter'.

The Stages of Piety

There are some stages of piety. The first stage is to avoid and restrain from committing sins and wrong doings; as it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) that none reaches (this stage of) piety unless he avoids unlawful things.[4]

In a tradition from the Prophet (S), deeds of people are divided into three kinds: 1) Those that are clearly lawful, whose lawfulness is vividly apparent. 2) Those that are clearly unlawful, whose unlawfulness is certain. 3) Some dubious things that are situated between these two. They are lawful but resemble the unlawful. The person who avoids even the dubious things will never approach the unlawful ones.[5]

Hadrat Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: *"A pious person is he whose deeds would not include anything shameful if they are put in a tray and displayed it around the world (to show them)".*[6]

The second stage of piety is the full obedience to what is revealed to the Prophet (S). Thus, piety consists of performing obligatory things (Wajibat) and avoiding the unlawful things.

The third stage of piety is to rid the heart and soul of everything save Allah. In this sense, a pious person is one who strains out from his wishes, those that are not pleasing to Allah, and relies not on individuals but on Him only; *viz,* he forsakes from hoping in every other being and hopes only in Him; he focuses his view on observing the Beauty and Glory of His Lordship. This is real piety; so, the Qur'an says:

O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah with the care which is due to Him... (3:102).

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 3

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend (in charity) of what We have provided them (2:3).

Commentary

The Effects of Piety on Man's Spirit and Body

Regarding the Faith and practices in Islam, the Qur'an, at the beginning of this Surah, divides people into three different categories:

1. The pious ones (Muttaqin), who accept Islam in all aspects.

2. Unbelievers, who are in the exact opposite state as compared to the first group. They confess their infidelity and do not refrain from expressing hatred and acting hostilely against Islam.

3. The hypocrites, who portray contradictory features. They show themselves Muslims when they are with Muslims, but they behave hostilely towards Muslims when they are with the enemies of Islam. Their main fundamental features are, in fact, the very infidelity of theirs, but they simulate affection for Islam, too.

Undoubtedly, the harm of this group, for Islam, is greater than the second group. Hence, the Qur'an, concerning them, is more severe.

This quality, of course, is found not only in Islam but also in all ideological schools of the world. Their members are either faithful to the doctrine of that school, or are clearly opposed to it, or they are conservative hypocrites. Furthermore, this proposition does not refer only to a specific time; it has always existed in all ages of the human world.

The Pious Ones, the First Group

The verses under discussion deal with the first group. These verses explain the special characteristics of the pious ones from the point of view of Faith and practice in five matters: Faith in the Unseen, establishment of prayer, spending in charity from all of the divine merits they possess, belief in the invitation of all prophets, and Faith in the Resurrection Day.

1. Faith In the Unseen

At first, the verse describes the pious ones as those:

Who believe in the Unseen… (***2:3***)

'The world of the Unseen' and ***'the world of the senses'*** are two concepts opposite each other. 'The world of the senses' is the visible and physical world, while 'the world of the Unseen' is a world beyond our senses. Therefore, the term /qayb/ is used 'for that which is concealed from us'. The Qur'an says:

…the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. (***59:22***).

'Faith in the Unseen' is just the first characteristic that separates the believers from unbelievers. Thus, the believers in heavenly religions contrast with the deniers of God, revelation, and Resurrection. It is for this very reason that 'Faith in the Unseen' has been mentioned as the first characteristic of 'the pious ones'.

The believers have cleft the limits of the world of 'materiality' and freed themselves from their restrictions. They have stepped into a quite vast open world and, with this broad scope of view that they have obtained, they have connected themselves with the realm of an extraordinary, bigger, and greater world. But the contrary group insists on confining Man, as an animal, inside the walls of the world of materialism. They call this retrogression, which is a kind of life filled with lusts and excessive luxuries, an advanced civilized life.

Comparing the concepts and doctrines of these two groups, we conclude that the 'pious ones' believe in 'the Unseen', a world very much wider and bigger than what can be seen or touched with the external senses in the world of existence. The Creator of this universe is Omniscient and Omnipotent, Who has infinite Glory and Insight. He is Eternal and has no end. He has planned the world in a good, regular, and precise design.

In the world of believing men, the spirit of Man has produced a great distance between humans and animals. For them, death does not mean an end. On the contrary, it is one of the stages of progression towards man's development. Death is an opening to a broader and greater world. Whereas a materialist believes that the world of being is restricted to what we can see. He says that natural science has proved that the rules of nature are a chain of obligatory rules by which, without any designs or special programs, this world has been fashioned. They believe productive power of the world has no intellect even as little as that of a child. And, Man is a part of nature, i.e., when he dies everything ends. His corpse is decomposed in a few days and joins with nature again as a natural component. They conclude that there is no life after death for Man, and there is no difference between Man and animal.

Are these two people with these two different methods of thinking comparable with each other? Are their actions and behaviours in the society the same?

The first one cannot ignore that which is right, just and benevolent, and helping other fellow members. But the second does not see any reason for any of these matters. He cares for only what is effective and beneficial in his physical life at present or in the future.

That is why that, in the lives of truthful believing people, there is purity, brotherhood, mutual understanding, and cooperation; while in the lives governed by materialism, colonialism, exploitation, plunder and murder are seen. Therefore, the Holy Qur'an, in the above-mentioned verses, considers ***'Faith in the Unseen'*** the first stage of piety.

Opinions are divided among the commentators as to whether Faith in the Unseen, here, points to Faith in Monotheism, or to a vast meaning that covers Faith in the world of revelation, Resurrection, angels and, in general, what is beyond the external senses.

We already pointed out that Faith in 'the world of beyond the external senses' is the first phase of separation of the believers from unbelievers. This makes it clear that the term ***'Unseen',*** here, contains the same vast meaning as the term that was pointed out. Moreover, the application of the word in this

verse is absolute and unrestricted. There is nothing included in the verse that would confine its meaning to a specific one.

In some traditions from Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)[7] the term ***‘Unseen’,*** in the verse under discussion, is rendered to the 12th Imam (‘a), who, as we believe, is alive right now but is concealed from the eyes of people. This idea does not contrast with what was said in the above, because it is one of the aspects of ***‘Unseen’,*** too. And, in other words, ***‘Unseen’*** is something which is not possible to be seen or heard by our external senses, such as sight or hearing or things outside the grasp of our other senses. The Existence of Allah is apparently hidden because of the limit of our external senses. The Hereafter, the status of the next world, is concealed from our eyes. In this gloomy time in which we live, the presence of prophets and our sinless Imams (‘a) are necessary for us, but, even our Expected Imam (‘a) whom we need to be our guide out in front of us, whose light of mastership, which would help us follow along this dim, murky, dangerous road that lies before us upon which we must travel until we reach the sound abode of ours, is absent from us. Apparently, he is out of our reach. Though, he, the esteemed one (‘a), is never heedless of his true followers and he is always aware of their circumstances. (There will be a more comprehensive discussion concerning the 12th Imam (‘a), later in the commentary).

This statement shows that at this time, which is the worst of the ages, how high the position of the persons with complete Faith is! And, as it is narrated, there is reason for the Holy Prophet (S) to say about them: *“How much I am eager to see my brothers* (*who will come to being*) *in ‘the end of time’!”.*[8]

We may consider that the Prophet (S), with such high rank and glory, has expressed his eagerness for seeing the true believers of this time, and has introduced them as his ‘brothers’.

2. Relationship with Allah

Another specialty of the ‘pious ones’ mentioned in the Qur’an is their prayers.

Prayer, which is the key to communion with Allah, holds the believers in permanent and perpetual contact with that great Origin of Creation. They have found the way to the world beyond this world, viz, the world of the supernatural. They bow only to Allah and submit only to the Great Creator of the World of Being. That is why there is no place for submission or surrender to any tyrants and oppressors in their agenda.

Such a human feels that he has been promoted to a situation higher than that of all other creatures for that he has the honour of standing in front of Allah and is worthy of speaking directly with Him. This status is the greatest factor necessary for training.

The person who, with his whole heart and mind, stands in front of Allah, at least five times a day and sincerely utters invocation, his thoughts, his actions and his speech altogether will become divine. How is it possible that a person like that could do anything against Allah’s pleasure?

The Excellence and Importance of Prayer

Prayer is the pillar of Faith, the means of attaining nearness to Allah, the expression of obedience to Him, the thanksgiving for His infinite Mercy, the imitation of the examples of the Holy Prophet and immaculate Imams (‘a), the strong link between a person and Allah, and the constant means of seeking and receiving His Guidance and assistance and avoiding errors and evil. Prayer is the only way in which faith that lives in the heart, can be made manifest in our actions, and can ensure admission to the realm of everlasting happiness in our life in this world as well as the life in the next world.

There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an and plenty of traditions in Islamic literature on the importance and virtue of prayer. Intellectual and religious considerations approve its excellence, too.

Here, we narrate the words of the Late Sahib Jawahir cited in *‘Jawahir al-Kalam’*, Vol. 7, p. 1. The words and ideas are based on the contents of the verses of the Qur’an and some authentic traditions:

“Prayer is an action that prevents the performance of hideous indecent deeds. This status causes the Fire of Hell to extinguish, and any pure believer to be linked with Allah by which he can make, spiritually, progress. Just as the water of a stream washes away dirt from the body, prayer washes away the sins of believers; and, its repetition five times a day is similar to washing the body in that stream repeatedly. Allah told Jesus (‘a) and other prophets (‘a) as well, to pray throughout their lives”.

“However, prayer is the basis of Islam and it is the best deed and the best subject (which is legislated by the religion). It is the standard and criterion of other deeds of people. Thus, when a person has performed the prayer completely, the reward of all other of his deeds is complete, because all of his good deeds are accepted. Therefore, prayer, comparing with other religious practices, even the religion itself; is considered as a pillar similar to the central pole of a tent. For this reason, the first deed of a mortal, which will be questioned about in the next life and will be discussed, is prayer’.

If prayer is accepted from a person, other (good) deeds of his lifetime will be evaluated and accepted from him. But, if it is refused, his other deeds will not be looked at and will be refused and returned to him. So, regarding this, it is not surprising if an abandoner of prayer is called an ‘unbeliever’. Yes, it is certainly so when the reason of its abandonment is especially for the scorning of the religion. Prayer is something that Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) did not know anything better or higher and more beloved than that with Allah.

Even, he (‘a) has said that these five daily canonical prayers are obligatory. He, who establishes them and observes them at their proper times, will meet Allah on the Judgment Day, and He holds a covenant stating that because of this he will enter Paradise. But he who does not keep up these obligatory prayers and does not observe them at their proper times, then, it will be up to Allah whether to forgive him or to punish him. And, the obligatory prayer is better than twenty Hajj-performances, each of which is better than a room full of gold that would completely be paid as donation in the way of Allah.

Or, the obligatory prayer is better than one thousand Hajj-performances, every one of them being better than the whole world with all its contents. Verily, obedience to Allah is service to Him, on the earth, and no service is comparable with prayer. That was why the angels called Zachariah (‘a) while he was praying in his sanctuary. When a person is preparing for saying prayer, the Divine favours come down from heaven to him on the earth and some angels surround him. An angel proclaims that if this prayerful believer knew what existed in the prayer, he would never neglect it...”

“Hadrat Ridha’, the 8th holy Imam (‘a), wrote as an answer to the problems of Muhammad Ibn Sanan that the reason of (the importance of) prayer is that it is the confession to the Lordship of Allah, Almighty and Glorious, and lack of attributing partners to Him. Prayer means to stand in front of the Almighty, Glory be to His Majesty, in a manner of humility, abasement and wretch ness and to seek forgiveness for the sins committed. In prayer, a servant puts his head down on the soil several times a day in order to glorify Allah, Almighty and Glorious, and to furnish His remembrance all the time. To stand in the presence of Allah in prayer, causes a believing person to avoid evils and it hinders him from all kinds of sin and corruption.”[9]

3. Relationship With People

Besides the constant communion with Allah, the pious ones have a close and permanent relationship with people, the creatures of Allah. For this very reason, the Holy Qur’an introduces their third characteristic in this verse as thus:

(***They***) ***spend*** (***in charity***) ***of what We have provided them*** (***2:3***).

It is noteworthy that the Qur’an does not say that ‘They spend (in charity) of what they have” but it says: ***‘of what We have provided them’.*** In this manner, it generalizes the subject of ‘charity’ so broadly that it includes all the material and spiritual gifts of Allah.

Therefore, the pious ones are those who donate not only from their material bounties but also from their spiritual gifts such as knowledge, science, intellect, physical power, or social abilities, and, in short, from all they have in their own possession. They donate from their own capital to those who are in need of them, and, in the meantime, they do not expect any recompense from them.

Another point is that the regulation of donation is a general regularity in the world of creation and, also, in the bodily system of every living creature. The heart of a man does not beat for itself alone but it donates of whatever it has to all of the cells.

The brain and the lungs, as well as other organs of the body, continually donate the vital results of their active functions. And, generally speaking, social life with the lack of donation is meaningless.

Sincere coherence with human beings is, in fact, coherence and attachment to Allah. A person who is attached to Allah, and knows that all bounties and sustenance proceed from Him, not from himself, will

not be displeased with giving charity but will be happy to donate His gifts to His servants on His way, and, as a consequence, he gains the physical and spiritual merits for doing it for himself[10]. At any rate, this kind of thinking purifies the soul of man from miserliness and envy. It changes the world of 'struggle for existence' to the world of 'humanity and civilization', a world in which everybody bonds himself to sharing his bounties with all the needy in his environment and, like the sun, gives light to his surroundings without expecting any favour in return or recompense.

It is notable that on the meaning of the phrase:

(***They***) ***spend*** (***in charity***) ***of what We have provided them*** (***2:3***).

A tradition from Imam-Sadiq ('a) says: *"It means that they share* (*and teach to those who need*) *the knowledge and science* Allah *has taught them."*[11]

It is obvious that this statement does not mean that donation is specific to knowledge but, since when speaking about charity almost all the attention is usually turned to monetary donations, Imam as-Sadiq ('a), by mentioning this kind of spiritual donation, wanted to clarify the broadness of the meaning of 'donation'.

So therefore, this idea makes it very clear that the word 'charity', referred to in the verse under discussion, is not restricted to the 'obligatory alms giving' (Zakat), but refers to alms in general, irrespective of obligatory or recommended ones; therefore, it has a vast meaning which includes any kind of help given gratuitously.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 4

والَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

And who believe in what has been revealed to you (***Muhammad***)***, and what has been sent down*** (***to other apostles***) ***before you; and of the Hereafter they are certain*** (***2:4***).

Commentary

Another characteristic of the pious ones is belief in all of the prophets and the Divine designs. The Qur'an says that they are those who believe in what has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) (i.e. the Qur'an) and what has been sent down (to other apostles preceding him like the Torah, the Evangel, the Psalms of David and the rest of the Divine Books).

Therefore, not only they do not feel that there is any difference in the basis of the invitation of prophets, but they know all prophets to be similar truthful teachers and trainers who came, one after another, in this great school of the world of human beings to persuade people to pave the path of their

development. Further, the pious ones not only do not consider the Divine religions the cause of dispersion and hypocrisy, but, regarding their fundamental unity, recognize them as a means of relation and sincere communication among nations.

Those who have this sort of concept and this point of view would cleanse their souls and minds from the dirt of obstinacy, and believe in all that the prophets of Allah have brought forth for the guidance and development of the human race. They would respect all the ***'guides'*** of the path of ***'Monotheism'.***

Belief in the instructions of the prophets of the past (‘a), of course, does not mean that they do not adapt their thoughts and deeds to the religion of the last prophet (S), which is the last and completing link of the series of religions. If they do anything other than that, they, in fact, regress on their path towards development.

Faith in the Resurrection is an epithet which is mentioned as the last quality in this series of qualities for the pious Ones.[12] It says:

…and of the Hereafter they are certain. (***2:4***)

In the phrase /wa bil ‘axirati hum yuqinun/ the word /yaqin/ is the state of conviction and certainty reached through accepting undoubtable evidence or unquestionable proof in / muttaqin /. One of the epithets of ‘the pious ones’, /muttaqin/, is having an unshakably firm conviction and certainty that the ultimate purpose of life here lies in the realm beyond it, in the direction towards the Absolute.

They are sure that Man is not created uselessly and purposelessly. The creation has defined a route for him which will never end with death, for, if everything came to a completion in this world, all of these statements and tremendous activities and movements in the universe would certainly be in vain if it was meant only for a brief temporary life.

He accepts that the Absolute Justice of Allah is waiting for all humankind and it is not so that our deeds in this world will be disregarded without having any reckoning and compensation.

This belief provides him with ease and tranquillity. The stresses resulting from the fulfilment of responsibilities not only do not hurt him, but on the contrary, he receives them willingly. He stands firmly in front of misfortunes. He does not resign to any unjust matter. He is sure that even the smallest action, good or evil will be compensated; and, after death, he will be transferred to a more comprehensive world where no cruelty or oppression exists. But he will meet the infinite favour and Mercy of Allah, the Just.

Belief in the Hereafter means cleaving the binding walls of materialism and reaching a happy realm, better and higher than that. The present world is like a school wherein Man should best prepare himself for the coming world. The present life is not the final goal but it is a preparation for the next life which will be eternal.

The life in this world is also similar to the prenatal period of a foetus in the mother’s womb. This period is

not the purpose of the creation of man, of course, but it is an evolutional stage for the next period of life. Yet, if this foetus does not finish its course safely and without any defects or harm until the baby is born, it will not be happy and prosperous in its next life.

Belief in the Hereafter brings a profound effect in the behaviour of human beings. It gives them courage and bravery, because, ***'martyrdom'*** in the way of a Divine holy purpose, which is life's climax of honour and pride in this world, is the most beloved thing to a believing person. Since, to him, martyrdom is the beginning of an eternal and everlasting life.

Belief in the Hereafter controls man against sins. In other words, our sins have a reverse ratio with our Faith in Allah and the Hereafter. The more that Faith is firm and decisive, the less the amount of sin is. One reference is the words of Allah where He commands David (‘a):

...And do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah: (as for) those who go astray from the path of Allah, they shall surely have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning (***38:26***).

Yes, this forgetfulness of the 'Day of Reckoning' in man is the origin of the kinds of disobedience, cruelty, and corruption which are the total source of grievous punishment.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 5

أُوْلَـئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord; and they are the ones who are the successful (***2:5***).

Commentary

The last verse in the verses under discussion refers to the fruit and the destination of the pious ones who have acquired the above five attributes. It says:

They are on (true) guidance from their Lord; and they are the ones who are the successful. (***2:5***)

In fact, both their guidance and their successfulness are guaranteed by Allah. So, it can be said that the only path towards felicity and salvation is the path of this group who, with these five special attributes, have received the guidance of Allah. The reason for the restriction, / 'ula'ika / the pious ones only, is clear in that His guidance is always universal but only the people with such characteristics who have chosen His narrow path, and none else, can be benefited by it, and will be successful in their life-journey in this world and the next.

It is worthy to note that the term / hidayat / 'guidance', as was stated before, has a vast meaning

including many kinds of guidance, all of which originate from Him alone, such as: Divine Guidance, Religious Guidance, and Natural Guidance. Some details about ‘guidance’ were discussed when commenting on verse 6 from Surah Al-Fatiha.[13]

Note:

By the way, imitating the style in Surah Al-Fatiha, these five beginning verses of the Surah, which were mentioned as a group at first, are exceptionally repeated again one by one both in Arabic and English when commenting on each of them. The cause of this repetition was the length of their descriptions. But from here on, only the English translations and the descriptions will be mentioned.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 6-7

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Surely, (***as for***) ***those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether you have warned them or have not warned them, they will not believe.*** (***2:6***)

خَتَمَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عظِيمٌ

Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and over their eyes is a covering, and there awaits them a great punishment. (***2:7***)

Commentary

Disbelievers, the Second Group

The followers of this group are just the opposite of ‘the pious ones’. Their characteristics are concisely expressed in the above two verses. In the first verse, it says:

Surely, (***as for***) ***those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether you have warned them or have not warned them, they will not believe.*** (***2:6***)

The first group, i.e., the pious ones, in all aspects and with all of their talents and faculties, are thoroughly ready to accept the truth and follow it when they receive it.

But this group, i.e. disbelievers, insist on their aberration so rigorously that they do not agree to show any inclination towards the truth even when it becomes completely clear to them. The Qur’an, which is a guide for the pious ones, is totally non-effective for this group. It makes no difference to them whether you describe for them or not, warn them or not, give good tidings to them or not. In principle, they are

not spiritually ready to follow the 'right path' or submit to it.

The second verse refers to the reason behind the existence of this bigotry and stubbornness. It indicates that they have sunk into impiety, infidelity, and enmity so deeply that they have lost their power of distinction. It says:

Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and over their eyes is a covering... (***2:7***)

And for that reason, a great penalty is appropriate for them as the consequence of their deeds, and they deserve it. As Allah warns:

...and there awaits them a great punishment. (***2:7***)

Thus, the eyes by which the pious ones see the signs of Allah, the ears through which they hear the words of right, and the hearts (and minds) wherein they conceive realities, are of no avail to the second group. They have minds, eyes, and ears but, when it comes to realities, they are not able to understand, to see, or to hear, indeed, because their disgraceful actions, their stubbornness, and their enmity, like curtains, have covered over these means of acknowledgement.

It is certain that man is worthy of being guided before he reaches this state, even if he is rather astray. But when he loses his sense of distinction, there will not be any way for him to attain felicity, because he does not have the means of acknowledgement. So, it is natural that 'the great punishment awaits him'. This case is like the situation of a lazy student who, by his own mis-choice, does not strive to study hard enough and consequently becomes involved in the torment of ignorance and lack of certification.

The important fact is that one should be careful of sins, and when he commits one, he should repent soon and wipe it out with doing good deeds, lest the sin will remain as a fast colour stain on his heart, that which would seal the heart (with sin). The turning of the mind and the heart from the 'real' towards the 'unreal', when it gets rigid is termed in the Holy Qur'an as 'sealing'.

A tradition from Imam al-Baqir ('a) says: *"There is not a believing servant but there is a white bright site on his heart, When he commits a sin, there appears a black dot in that site. If he repents, the black dot will disappear, But if he continues committing sins, that black dot enlarges until it covers the white bright site completely, When this site is covered (with blackness) the holder of this heart will never return back to doing good deeds. This is the meaning of the words of Allah, Almighty and Glorious, when He says:*

Nay! Rather what they used to do has put rust upon their hearts. (***83:14***)[14]

Infidelity and its Meaning

Philologically, the term /kufr/ means 'to cover, to conceal'. In religion it means: 'to deny the Grace or the Existence of Allah, His Prophet, the prophecies of the apostles, and the Resurrection'. He who denies these principles of the religion, even only one of them, according to the consensus of Muslims, is out of

the Circle of Islam and becomes counted among the disbelievers.

Anyhow, infidelity is ***'the corrupt tree'*** whose root is false ideas, its trunk is immorality, its branches and leaves are sins and vices, and its fruit is disgrace in this world and punishment in the coming world. But Faith is ***'the good tree'*** whose root is true conviction, its trunk is fair virtues, its branches and leaves are good deeds, and its fruit is the happiness and prosperity in this world and the next world which, itself, is eternal salvation.

Surah Ibrahim says:

Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a goodly word (being) like a goodly tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven, (***14:24***)

Yielding its fruit in every season by the leave of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for men that they may receive admonition. (***14:25***)

And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the surface of the earth, it has no stability. (***14:26***)

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 8-16

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَمَا هُم بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

And of people there are some who say: 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day', but they do not really believe. (***2:8***)

يُخَادِعُونَ اللّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُم وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have Faith, but they deceive none save themselves, and they are not aware. (***2:9***)

فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّهُ مَرَضاً وَلَهُم عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

In their hearts is a disease, so Allah has increased their disease and there awaits them a painful punishment for that they were lying. (***2:10***)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لاَ تُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ قَالُواْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

And when it is said to them: 'Do not make corruption in the earth', they say: 'Verily, we are only reformers' (***2:11***)

أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَـكِن لاَّ يَشْعُرُونَ

Indeed, they themselves are the corruptors, but they are not aware. (***2:12***)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُواْ أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاء أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاء وَلَـكِن لاَّ يَعْلَمُونَ

And when it is said to them: 'Believe as the people believe', they say: 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?' Beware! Truly, they themselves are the fools, but they do not know. (***2:13***)

وَإِذَا لَقُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْاْ إِلَى شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُواْ إِنَّا مَعَكْمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ

And when they meet those who believe, they say: 'We believe (***in what you believe***)***', but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: 'Verily, we are with you; we were only mocking'.*** (***2:14***)

اللّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

Allah shall pay them back for their mockery, and He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on. (***2:15***)

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُواْ الضَّلاَلَةَ بِالْهُدَى فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُواْ مُهْتَدِينَ

These are they who have bought error (***in exchange***) ***for guidance, hence their transaction yields them no profit, nor are they guided*** (***aright***)***.*** (***2:16***)

Commentary

Hypocrites, the Third Group

The above verses state a short but very expressive explanation on 'hypocrites' and their spiritual specialties and characteristics illustrated by their actions.

Attention should be attracted to the fact that: In a special period of its sensitive historical course, Islam was faced with a specific group among the whole of the people, who neither had the courage to truly

accept the invitation of Islam, nor had the power and boldness to openly oppose it.

This third group, whom the Qur'an calls, in Arabic terminology, /munafiqun/ 'hypocrites', is also termed the two-faced ones. They penetrate in the rows of true Muslim communities and become a great danger for Islam and Muslims. It is usually difficult for the faithful believers to recognize them, because they appear in the society with the same manner as other Muslims do. But the Qur'an yields some clear exact signs and specialties about them which identify their hidden routines everywhere and in all centuries. These particular qualifications can provide good criteria for the real Muslims to recognize them.

At the beginning, it gives an illustration of hypocrisy itself, saying:

And of the people there are some who say: 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day', but they do not really believe. (***2:8***)

They imagine this action of theirs as a kind of cleverness or, so to speak an advantageous policy. Therefore:

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have Faith… (***2:9***)

It is not such as they think:

…but they deceive none save themselves, and they are not aware. (***2:9***)

Having deviated from the Straight Path, they spend their whole lives misled. They apply their power and potentials in vanity where their gain is nothing but failure, infamy, and a painful Divine penalty.

In the next verse, the Qur'an points to the fact that hypocrisy is, indeed, a disease. A safe and sound person does not have two faces. There is complete harmony ruling between his soul and his body, since outward and inward, as well as body and spirit, are complementary to each other. If a person is a believing one, his entire being cries Faith and indicates his conviction. And if he goes astray, his deviation is revealed both outwardly and inwardly. This dissimilarity of spirit and body possessed by the hypocrite is a new additional disease. It is a sort of contradiction or duplicity or cleft that governs over the self of a man. Then, it says:

In their hearts is a disease… (***2:10***)

Hence, in the regularity of creation, everybody who chooses a path and equips himself with the necessary means to pave it would go forth on that very path. Or, in other words, the abundance of actions and imaginations of a man on his chosen route would make the above idea much more colourful and secure. Then, the verse continues saying:

…so Allah has increased their disease… (***2:10***)

The investment of the hypocrite is 'lies'. They adjust the contradictions found in their lives, as much as

they can; each lie with its own set of excuses. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it says:

…and there awaits them a painful punishment for that they were lying. (***2:10***)

Then, the Qur'an refers to their specialties, the first of which is the claim of being 'reformers', while they are, in fact, mischief-mongers, saying:

And when it is said to them: 'Do not make corruption in the earth', they say: 'Verily, we are only reformers' (***2:11***)

Indeed, they themselves are the corruptors, but they are not aware. (***2:12***)

Both their persistence on the path of hypocrisy and their accustomedness to these hideous disgraceful agenda have caused them to think, gradually, that their activities are useful and constructive. And, as it was mentioned previously, when sin is in excess and treads the limits, it seizes the sense of distinction, or even, it reverses the man's distinction. In this state, impurity and impiety prevail as his second nature.

Another specialty of this group is that they think themselves wise and clever while they think the believers are some simple-minded and credulous fools; as the Qur'an says:

And when it is said to them: 'Believe as the people believe', they say: 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?'… (***2:13***)

Thus, they accuse the truth-seeking, pure-hearted people of foolishness, for that these people, observing the signs of reality and rightfulness in the content of the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S), have humbly accepted it. The hypocrites consider corruption, duplicity, and hypocrisy signs of their cleverness and wisdom. Yes, in their logic, intellect has changed its place with foolishness.

So, the Qur'an, answering them, says:

…Beware! Truly, they themselves are the fools, but they do not know. (***2:13***)

Is this not, within itself, a kind of foolishness, that a person does not specify his conviction, but changes colour according to whatever group or class of ideology he joins, and assumes duplicity or even multifarious ness? Is it not silly for a person to spend his faculties and abilities in doing evil and making plots for destruction and, in the meantime, to count himself among the wise?

The third specialty is that they change colour every day and choose the direction of every group they meet. As the Holy Qur'an says:

And when they meet those who believe, they say: 'We believe (***in what you believe***)***'…*** (***2:14***)

They tell the believers that they follow the same school of thought as theirs, that is, they have accepted Islam eagerly and there is no difference between them.

…but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: 'Verily, we are with you… (***2:14***)

They tell their fellow men that they are mocking the believers when telling them that they have believed:

…we were only mocking… (***2:14***)

They say to them that they are deceiving them and, actually, they are supporters of their fellow men whom they have taken friend with and, keep their secrets safe and hidden.

Then, the Qur'an, with a beating and decisive tone says:

Allah shall pay them back for their mockery, and He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on. (***2:15***)

The concluding verse, on this subject, expresses their final fate which is a very grievous, inauspicious, and dark end, thus:

These are they who have bought error (***in exchange***) ***for guidance, hence their transaction yields them no profit, nor are they guided*** (***aright***). (***2:16***)

For this very reason, their purchase not only is of no avail for them, but also they have lost even their investment.

Explanations

The Appearance of Hypocrisy and its Roots

When a revolution takes place in a society, particularly a revolution like the Islamic Revolution which was founded on the virtues of Right and Justice, the interests of an oppressive, tyrannical, and selfish, group will be exposed and possibly placed in danger. At first, this group mocks it, and then they apply the power of guns, economic sanctions, and continuous social propagation in order to try to subvert it. But when the signs of triumph are made manifest for all of the forces and authorities of the region, some of the opponents change their practical style of opposition and apparently resign themselves, but, in fact, they organize a hidden antagonistic group against the revolution.

These vicious individuals who are termed 'hypocrites', because of their actual duplicity, are the most harmful enemies of the revolution, because their position is not quite clear so that the revolutionists can recognize them and avoid them. They deceitfully imitate and join the faithful people and occupy some social positions in the rows of the pure, truthful believers. They sometimes attain the sensitive posts, even.

Until the time when the Holy Prophet (S) emigrated from Mecca to Medina, Muslims had not established a government. The prime essential basis of the Islamic government was founded when the Holy Prophet (S) arrived in Medina. This process was made more manifest with the occurrence of the triumph of Badr,

viz.; a small but progressive government was formally organized.

It was at that time that the profits of many authorities in Medina, particularly that of the Jews, who were respected by Arabs, were being threatened. The Jews were respected at that time, mostly because they were of 'the People of the Book'.[15] They were fairly learned, and they were economically advanced. It was they who, before the advent of the prophet of Islam (S) used to give the good news of his coming.

There were others, too, who were aspiring for the leadership of the people of Medina and were disappointed due to the migration of the Messenger of Allah. The cruel, selfish chieves of Medina and their plunderers adherents saw that people, even their relatives, were tending to Islam and abundantly believing in the Prophet (S). They, after resisting for a short time, understood that they could not help but to accept Islam, though only outwardly. They realized that if they had opposed and stood against the new process, besides the damages of war and economic problems, they would have faced the danger of destruction; particularly because the total power of the Arab was his tribe, but their tribes had separated from them for the most part.

For this reason, they had developed a grudge in their hearts against the Holy Prophet (S) and his mission. So, they secretly planned to subvert Islam. Therefore, they selected a third way. They decided to accept the Prophet (S) apparently, and to follow their own plots hiddenly.[16]

In short, the appearance of hypocrisy in a society is usually the effect of one of these two causes. The first is the triumph and power of the existing revolutionary school of thought in the society. The second cause is the spiritual weakness and the lack of nobility and courage needed to challenge such a force.

The Necessity of Knowing the Hypocrite

Undoubtedly, hypocrisy and the hypocrite were not only particular to the time of the Prophet (S); they are found in any society and at any time. They should be recognized, of course, according to the defined criteria that the Qur'an has introduced them with, in order to prevent their probable damages or harms.

There are various characteristics mentioned about the hypocrite in the former verses, as well as through Surah Al-Munafiqun No. 63 and, also, in numerous Islamic traditions. Here are a few of these characteristics:

1. Great public outbursts and high claims with lots of boasting, but little action making their claims and actions unparalleled.

2. To swing to every side in any environment with any group; to speak among any society with the ideas of that society's school of thought, and to show themselves adherents in the society of true followers but, in the meantime, to cooperate with the oppositional group.

3. To separate their affairs from those of the people and to form secret hidden societies with specific plans.

4. Characterized by tricks, deceit, lies, flattery, breach of promises, and treachery.

5. To act before others with self-aggrandizement and self-conceit, counting people silly, simple, and foolish, while knowing themselves wise and clever.

In short, duplicity of personality, or contrast between internal and external, which is the clear characteristic of the hypocrite, has different effects on their personal and social behaviour, which can be easily figured out by the keen observer.

How beautifully the Qur'an puts it when it says:

In their hearts is a disease.... (***2:10***)

Which sickness can be worse than the sickness of duplicity of outward and inward character? What disease is more painful than the illness of self-aggrandizement or lack of courage for challenging the things that we do not believe in?

However, the disease of hypocrisy, though it is hidden, is recognizable by its different features. It is similar to heart disease which cannot be concealed wholly; although it is unseen, its signs and symptoms can be seen in one's face and limbs quite vividly.

Hypocrisy, in its specific meaning, is the condition of some faithless persons who are apparently counted among Muslims, but their hearts are actually pledged to infidelity. They are the most dangerous group, not only for Islam but also for any revolutionary progressive school of thought. The hypocrites penetrate into the communities of Muslims and misuse any chance or opportunity for hindering affairs. For this very hostile position that they have, they are the object of serious attacks in the Qur'an. One complete Surah of the Qur'an is revealed about their circumstances which is entitled '***Al-Munafiqun***'. They have also been reproached and condemned very strongly in the narrations of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

To introduce the hypocrite, a tradition from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) who has narrated from the Prophet (S) says: *"There are three specialties that when they are in a person, helshe is a hypocrite even the one who observes the fast, practices prayers and considers oneself a Muslim: he who is treacherous when he is trusted, when he speaks he tells lies, and when he promises he fails it".* 17

Here, we attract your attention to the noble words of Imam Amir Al-Mu'minin ‘Ali (‘a) about the hypocrites. He says: *"O' creatures of Allah! I advise you to fear, and I warn you against the hypocrites.*

They themselves are misguided and they will misguide you. They are lost in the labyrinth of sins and vices and will make you lose your straight path in that tortuous maze. They change their colours to suit their surroundings, and their words always have double meanings. To convert you to their views and to win your sympathies they will resort to every sort of fraud and pretence, will adopt varieties of artifices and pretexts and will apply all possible allurements and deceptions. They always lie in ambush to seduce you. They pretend to be sincere and honest but their hearts are full of hypocrisy and vileness. Their movements are very subtle. To mislead you they work so artfully and cunningly that you cannot easily find out their purpose. They poison your minds without your knowing it, like a disease spreading inside your body without your realizing the fact. They behave as if they are ministering cures to your ailments. They talk as if they really feel for your troubles, but the result of their activities and their persuasions will affect you like an incurable disease.

Happiness and prosperity of others make them jealous and unhappy. They will do their worst to drag others into difficulties, reverses, and troubles. They will exert themselves to convert hopes of others into disappointments and despairs. And they have their victims in every walk of life.

They know how to touch your heart and how to gain your ears. For your every sorrow they have crocodile tears to shed and for every pain they offer you a balm, ineffective or injurious. If they praise you, it is with the hope of getting louder praises out of you. If they want to get something out of you, they will pester you with their demands. If they wish to slander anybody they will expose him threadbare. If they pass judgments they always forsake equity and justice".[18]

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 17–20

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَاراً فَلَمَّا أَضَاءتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لاَّ يُبْصِرُونَ

The likeness of them is as the likeness of a man who kindled a fire, and when it lit all about him Allah took away their light and left them in darkness unseeing. (***2:17***)

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ

(***They are***) ***deaf, dumb, blind – so they shall not return*** (***to the right path***) (***2:18***)

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِم مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ واللّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكافِرِينَ

Or (***their***) ***likeness is as a rainstorm from heaven wherein is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, fearful of death; thus Allah***

encompasses the infidels. (***2:19***)

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاء لَهُم مَّشَوْاْ فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُواْ وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّه عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

The lightning well-nigh snatches away their sight, whensoever it gives them light, they walk therein, and when it darkens over them they stand still. Had Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Truly, Allah is All-powerful over all things. (***2:20***)

Commentary

Two Interesting Parables Illustrating the Hypocrite

After stating the epithets and characteristics of the hypocrite, the Holy Qur'an, in order to illustrate their condition, likens them to two expressive parables:

1. In the first parable, the idea is that they are similar to a person who kindles a fire (by dark night) – (to distinguish the right way from the false way under its light and reach the destination). It says:

The likeness of them is as the likeness of a man who kindled a fire, and when it lit all about him Allah took away their light, and left them in darkness unseeing. (***2:17***)

They think they can challenge against the darkness they are in with a small little fire. But, it happens that suddenly a storm arrives, or a heavy rain falls, or their fuel runs out and the fire dies in coldness; so, they remain helpless, wandering in the terrible darkness.

Then, it adds:

(***They are***) ***deaf, dumb, blind – so they shall not return*** (***to the right path***) (***2:18***)

because they no longer have the essential necessary means of grasping the truth in their possession.

Allah, the Exalted, stating the status of the hypocrites and unbelievers, informs His Messenger that they have totally lost their human innate potentialities. They, abusing it, have destroyed the talent which Allah has originally put in their created nature and they should revive it in order for it to be used correctly. They have entirely deprived themselves of the real function of the divine faculties of sight, hearing, and speech. These sense organs are practically left useless and ineffective.

2. In the second parable, the scene of their life is illustrated in another way.

It is a dark fearful night, full of terror and danger. The rain is heavily falling and lightning flashes in the corner of the horizon every now and then. The horrible crashes of thunder seem to tear the eardrums. A defenceless person, amazed at the situation in this vast dark dangerous plain, gains no benefit. For this

frightened person, whose back is wet from the rain, there is neither a safe and secure shelter to take refuge, nor does the darkness let him step forth towards his destination.

The Holy Qur'an, in a short sentence, explains the situation of such a wandering passenger, thus:

Or** (**their**) **likeness is as a rainstorm from heaven wherein is darkness, thunder and lightning…* (2:19***)**

Then, it adds:

…They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, fearful of death… (***2:19***)

And, at the end of the verse, the Qur'an points to a fact that wherever the disbelievers go, they are under the forceful control and watch of Allah. It says:

…Thus, Allah encompasses the infidels. (***2:19***)

In this situation lightning brightens the expanse of the sky again and again.

The lightning well-nigh snatches away their sight … (***2:20***)

Whenever the lightning strikes and lightens the dark spread of the desert, they walk a few steps under that light, but, immediately after that, they find themselves in the same darkness they were in before:

…whensoever it gives them light, they walk therein, and when it darkens over them they stand still… (***2:20***)

Every moment, they feel the danger in front of them because there is nothing in this desert, such as a mountain, a tree, or anything else for them to seek refuge in order to protect themselves from the danger of the flash of lightning and thunderbolt. At any moment they may be seized by the lightning as its prey and be laid in ashes in a blink of an eye!

There is even the danger of the sound of thunder tearing their eardrums and the sharp flash of lightning blinding their eyes. Yes, it is true:

…Had Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Truly, Allah is All-powerful over all things. (***2:20***)

At the time of the Holy Prophet (S), the quick spread of Islam, like the lightning, dazzled their eyes, and the verses of the Qur'an, which uncovered their secrets, surrounded them as quick as lightning. They thought that another verse might come down, too, and remove the curtains from some other secrets, so, they would become publicly more disgraced.

The Qur'an also points to this very meaning where it says:

The Hypocrites are afraid lest a Surah should be sent down about them, showing them what is (***really passing***) ***in their hearts, say: 'Mock you! But verily Allah will bring to light all that you fear*** (***should be revealed***)*'* (***9:64***).

Again, the Qur'an, verifying that the hypocrites were always in terror and fear that with their secrets being manifested, Allah's command would come down for the Muslims to fight them, the worst interior enemy of Islam, and destroy them, says:

Truly, if the Hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, and those who stir up sedition in the City, desist not, We shall certainly stir thee up against them: then will they not be able to stay in it as your neighbours for any length of time. (***33:60***).

They shall have a curse on them: wherever they are found, they shall be seized and slain (***without mercy***) (***33:61***).

In the Islamic literature, as was mentioned before, the traditions and data narrated about the hypocrite are abundant. One of them is the tradition that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) quoted from his father and grandfathers who, in turn, had narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) who, addressing Hazrat 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a), said: *"There are three signs for a believer: prayer, fasting, and alms. There are also indications referring to a hypocrite: when he speaks he tells lies, when he promises, he breaks them, and when he is entrusted with* (*something*)*, he proves himself to be dishonest"*[19]

Again, Abdullah 'Umar narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) that there are four characteristics which are the signs of hypocrisy: lie in speech, excuse in promise, wickedness in enmity, and dishonesty in deposit.[20]

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1. Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 78.
2. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 66.
3. Al-Burhan, Vol. 1, p. 54.
4. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 81.
5. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 2, p. 221.
6. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 82.
7. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 31.
8. Makhzan al-'Irfan, Vol. 1, p. 99.
9. Jawahir al-Kalam, Vol. 7, p. 1.
10. For the importance of charity and its effects, refer to later explanations concerning Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:261-274.
11. Majma' al-Bayan Vol. 1, p. 39; and Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 32.
12. True Faith is, indeed, accompanied with /yaqin/ 'certainty'. This status in a person may be defined from different scopes of view. The most important one of them is 'certainty of knowledge', which has been described as having three stages. More details are given on page 208, Vol. 2.
13. For further explanation about 'guidance' review pages 55-61 in this book.
14. Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 209, Tradition 20.
15. For the meaning of 'the People of the Book' see p. 202.

16.
This example also happened in the Islamic Revolution of Iran where they played the same role but, luckily, under the light of Allah's Grace and through the awareness of this honourable nation, they failed.

17. Safinat al-Bihar, Vol. 2, p. 605.
18. Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 194 Arabic print, and 199, p. 172 English version.
19. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 77, p. 53, Tradition 3.
20. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Vol. 2, p. 198.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 2 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 21 – 27

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 21-22

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O' mankind! Worship your Lord Who created you, and those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (***against evil***) (***2:21***)

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الأَرْضَ فِرَاشاً وَالسَّمَاء بِنَاء وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقاً لَّكُمْ فَلاَ تَجْعَلُواْ لِلّهِ أَندَاداً وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Who has spread out the earth as a resting place for you, and has made heaven as a canopy, and has sent down water from heaven, wherewith He brings forth fruits for your sustenance; so do not set up rivals with Allah while you know (***2:22***)

Commentary

Do Worship Allah!

In the former verses, Allah describes the statuses of three groups of people (the righteous, the disbelievers, and the hypocrites), by explaining that the righteous are inside the circle of the Divine Guidance and the *Qur'an* guides them; while the hearts of the disbelievers are sealed with ignorance and, because of their own deeds, their eyes are covered with negligence which has taken away their sense of perception. And, the hypocrites are some ill-hearted people whose evil actions increase their

sickness.

In the verses under discussion, after that vivid comparison, the path of felicity and salvation is specified as following the path of the first group, the righteous:

O' mankind! Worship your Lord Who created you, and those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (***against evil***) (***2:21***).

What is Servitude and Worship?

The word 'servitude' in lexicon means: 'the condition of subjection, submissiveness and obedience of a slave to a master'. Worship is the utmost aspect of submissiveness to the One Who is at the highest degree of virtue, kindness, benevolence, and magnanimity. That is why He has distinctly commanded:

...That you worship none but Him... (***17:23***).

The person who has a little understanding can apply his intellect to know himself and his own Lord. When he recognizes himself, the one who has been considered the noblest creature, he will know his own Lord and Cherisher, too. This is a popular tradition that the person who after knowing himself, would know his Lord and Cherisher by that recognition. Then, as it is said, the key to the recognition of Allah is the recognition of one's self. When he finds himself in his servitude and his Lord in His Divinity, he understands that he should concentrate his obedience, humility, submissiveness and servitude unto the One in Whose hand and Will is his soul and entity; the One from Whom (SWT) he takes sustenance constantly. If the emanation of existence from the Absolute Bountiful Origin ceased from him even for a moment, he would be deprived of the bounty of existence.

Some Explanations

Regarding the above verses, there are some points, here, that should be paid attention to:

1. The phrase /ya ayyu-han-nas/ ***'O' mankind',*** which occurs twenty times in the Holy Qur'an, has a general and collective meaning that envelops all human beings of any race, tribe, or colour. This clearly shows that the Holy Qur'an does not pertain exclusively to a special group of people, but it invites every single person to its invitation, in general. It persuades everybody to accept Monotheism and refuse any idolatry and deviation from the path of theism.

2. To invoke the sense of people's thankfulness and to concentrate their attention on the worshipping of Allah, it begins from the greatest bounty, i.e., the bounty of the creation of all human beings. It is a bounty that illustrates both the tower or Allah and His Knowledge, in addition to His ***'General Mercy'*** and ***'Specific Mercy',*** because in the creation of Man, the best creature in the world of existence, the signs of His infinite Knowledge and Power, together with His vastly distributed bounties, are clearly seen.

The reason that some do not bow before Allah and do not worship Him is mostly because they do not

contemplate their own creation and the creation of those who came before them. They do not take into consideration that it is not right to attribute this magnificent creation to the blind and deaf causes of nature. We cannot think of these accurate, reliable and incomparable bounties, which are vividly seen in the body and the spirit of Man, from any origin except Allah, Who is the source of all knowledge and power.

Therefore, the remembrance of these bounties is both a reason for theology and a stimulus for thankfulness and worshipping, along the path of Allah.

3. The fruit of this worshipping is piety and righteousness:

...so that you may guard yourselves (***against evil***) (***2:21***).

Thus, our worshipping and prayers do not add anything to the Dignity and Glory of Allah, just as the abandoning of them does not take anything from His Greatness and Beauty. These kinds of practices are some training classes to teach man piety, which is synonymous with having a sense of responsibility, and, the standard of measuring one's personality. Finally, it is worship that causes man to attain the epithet of being pious, – a good mood in the spirit of man, that comes into being as a result of worship and servitude unto Allah.

4. The emphasis on the phrase:

...those before you... (***2:21***)

in the verse, may refer to the idea that if you agree with the custom of your ancestors that you should worship idols, Allah is the creator of both you and your ancestors. He is the Master and the Cherisher of you and your ancestors both. So, worshipping the idols, either done by you or by your ancestors, is not anything but aberration.

The Sky and the Earth are Bounties

In the next verse, it points to some other great bounties of Allah that can serve to motivate men to be thankful. At first, it refers to the creation of the Earth and its Creator:

Who has spread out the earth as a resting place for you... (***2:22***).

The earth is like a mount that carries you on its back. It continues moving at a wonderful speed in space. It has different movements, but you feel no shaking at all. So, the earth is one of Allah's great bounties.

Another bounty is the gravity of the earth which enables you to walk, rest, build houses and to prepare gardens, fields, and all kinds of vehicles, instruments, etc; for your usage. Have you ever thought that if the gravity of Earth did not exist, because of its rotation, all of us and all of our houses and furniture, or, in general, everything on the globe would be immediately thrown floating into space?

The term /firas/ *'a resting place'* not only has the meaning of rest and tranquillity but also contains the concept of being pleasant and warm with a moderate temperature.

It is interesting that, commenting on this verse, 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn, the fourth Imam of the Shi'ah school ('a), has clearly explained this meaning, thus: *"Allah has arranged the earth adapted to your nature and appropriate for your bodies. He made it neither very hot so that it roasts you, nor very cold so that it freezes you. He made it neither too aromatic so much so that its odour hurts your brains, nor too foul-smelling to cause your death. He planned it neither too soft so that you be drowned in it, like in water, nor too rigid and stable to enable you to build houses and make graves to bury the corpses of your men (which cause many disasters when they remain unburied)... Yes, it is for this reason that He has spread out the earth as a resting place for you'."*[1]

The word /bana/, considering the term /alaykum/ 'above you', refers to the meaning that the heaven is made up above you like a canopy. This idea is mentioned in another place in the Holy Qur'an, saying:

And We have made the heaven as a canopy well-guarded... (***21:32***)

This statement may seem amazing to some of those who are acquainted with the intrinsic structure of the heaven and earth from the point of modem astronomy. They may ask where and how this canopy is. Does this idea not call to mind the Ptolemaic Theory which indicated that planets are set over each other in the sky like the layers of an onion? The subject will be made clear when the following explanation is considered.

The term / sama' / has been used in the Qur'an in different places whose common meaning is something alongside the solution to the above problem. One of those meanings is referred to in this verse. It is the very atmosphere around the earth, that is, the thick aerial distance with a mass of gases that has surrounded the globe whose thickness, according to what specialists have said, is, roughly speaking, hundreds of kilometres, though it is not distributed uniformly in the vertical direction.

If we contemplate the essential and vital function of this mass of air, generally called the atmosphere, which has enveloped the whole earth, we will understand how this strong and stable canopy, or ceiling, is effective in protecting the lives of human beings.

This special amount of air which, as a crystal ceiling, has surrounded us, the inhabitants of the earth, is so strong and resisting that in comparison with a steel dam several meters thick, it is stronger; while it does not hinder the brilliant sunshine, which has a vital, life- giving and pleasant ray, from reaching us.

If this ceiling were not over us, the earth would be continuously beaten with showers of celestial meteorites, wherein human beings would have no peace and calmness. But this several-hundred-kilometre thick airy ceiling burns almost all the celestial meteorites before they reach the surface of the earth, except a few of them which can sometimes pass through it and fall somewhere on the ground to warn the earthly living creatures as a ring of danger. This small number of stones has never succeeded

to destroy the security of human lives yet; except on those occasions that Allah used them to destroy previous generations for their evil deeds.

The atmosphere, a vast and complicated physical system, has a basic environmental influence on plant, animal, and human life.

One of the references which shows that one of meanings of the Arabic word /sama/ as ***'the atmosphere of the earth',*** is a tradition cited by the sixth Imam, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) describing the colour of the sky for one of his followers, Mufaddal.

He said: *"O Mufaddal! Contemplate the colour of the sky which* Allah *has created so that it seems blue, – a colour that is the most appropriate for the eyes, and looking at it strengthens the vision."*[2]

We all know today that the blue colour of the sky is nothing but the reflection of sunlight on the intense thick air around the earth. Therefore, the word / sama / ‘sky’, here, refers to the very ‘atmosphere of the earth’.[3]

Surah An-Nahl says:

Do they not look at the birds held poised in the midst of (***the air and***) ***the sky?*** (***16:79***).

Then it refers to rain, thus:

…and has sent down water from heaven… (***2:22***).

But, what water! It is a life-giver, an essential producer of vital energy, and the origin of all inhabited regions containing many material blessings.

The phrase:

And has sent down water from heaven (***2:22***)

confirms the fact, once more, that / sama’/, here, means the atmosphere of the earth. And we know that it is clouds that produce rain and clouds are the formation of water vapor floating in the air, above the surface of the earth.

Commenting on the bounty of rain coming down from the sky, ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn, Imam Sajjad (‘a), has cited an interesting narration which says: *"Allah has sent down rain from the sky to water the peaks of mountains, and hills, ditches and, on the whole, all sites high or low* (*saturating them completely*). *He planned for it to rain continually and gently, with raindrops being individual and separated from each other; sometimes in the form of drizzles or mist like, and sometimes in the form of rainfall, in order to let it go down in the soil and saturate it. He did not let it fall as a flood which would wash away and destroy the lands, trees, fields and fruits".*[4]

Then, the Qur'an refers to the kinds of fruits and nutritious foods that are produced because of rain and awarded to men as their sustenance. It says:

...where with He brings forth fruits for your sustenance... (***2:22***)

This process of producing fruits is one of the most valuable proofs of His Existence. On one hand, it indicates the vast extent of Allah's Mercy unto all human creatures, and on the other hand, it specifies His Power by which, from colourless water, He can create thousands of colours in fruits and grains whose different properties are useful for men, as well as other living creatures. Hence, immediately after that, it adds:

...so do not set up rivals with Allah while you know. (***2:22***)

Verily, you know that these idols, or partners, which are the creations of your own fancy, have neither created you nor given you sustenance nor any of your bounties. Then, how do you go after those false gods? Do not adopt any equals for Allah and be devoted to Him to translate His Will into a practical life.

Explanation: Idolatry In Different Forms

It is necessary to note that the false gods are not exclusively wooden or stone idols, or, for example, recognizing a man such as Jesus Christ (ʿa) as one of the trinity, but the concept has a broader scope of meaning. The false gods may be superstitions, self, or even some great or glorious things like rank, position, art, poetry, science, or, kinds of pride which can be the hidden forms of idolatry when they are set up as rivals to Allah. So, in general, knowing anything save Allah, effective in life is a kind of idolatry.

A Detailed Scientific Meaning of Atmosphere

The Qur'anic term /sama'/ 'sky', wherefrom the rain, for example, comes down, sometimes has the meaning of atmosphere, whose explanation according to some encyclopaedias is as follows:

The ***'atmosphere'*** is the mass of 'air' surrounding the earth to a distance of several hundred kilometres. It appears insubstantial but in reality, it has enormous mass. It is not simply a formless mass of gases which can be divided into several layers on the basis of meteorological and electromagnetic considerations, but it consists, roughly, of three major layers which differ widely in their characteristics. These layers are the troposphere, the stratosphere, and the ionosphere.

The troposphere is the layer of air that lies next to and immediately above the earth's surface. The height of the troposphere varies from the poles of the earth to the Equator, being about four or five miles at the poles and about 10 miles at the Equator.

Stratosphere was the term formerly applied to the entire atmosphere above the troposphere. Later it was found that the temperature did vary significantly with the height and also that there existed various stratifications. Some scientists have introduced rather detailed terminology to describe various layers of

increasing, decreasing, and constant temperature in the atmosphere and the Ozone layer. But here the distinction will be made between two layers only: the ***'stratosphere'*** *extending* upward from the tropopause to the ***ionosphere,*** and the ionosphere, whose lowest ionized layer is found at a height of 35 to 40 miles.

The standard pressure of the atmosphere (760 millimetres) is very nearly equal to 1000000 dynes per square centimetre and is often referred to as the 'bar'. The 'millibar' is 1/1000 of this quantity, sanctioned by the International Meteorological Conferences as the standard for the expression of barometric pressure.

If the atmosphere were of uniform density at a standard pressure of 760 millimetres of mercury and at a temperature of 0°C, its height could easily be calculated based on the weight of a cubic centimetre of air being 0.0012928 grams.

The height of such a uniform atmosphere is 7.99 kilometres (4.97 miles), and is known as the 'height of homogeneous atmosphere' conveniently useful in certain physical computations.

The actual height of the atmosphere is somewhat difficult to determine since it becomes very tenuous at great heights. We may, however, infer its extent from three sources: (1) the duration of twilight which depends upon scattered sunlight from high atmospheric particles; (2) the height at which meteors become luminous; and (3) observation of auroral streamers. Twilight has been observed to exist until the sun is about 18° below the horizon, which, at altitude of 45°, indicates the existence of sufficient atmospheric particles to scatter sunlight at a height of over 60 kilometres (37 miles). Meteors have been observed to become luminous as high as 300 kilometres (186 miles). Auroral streamers have been seen to stretch upward to a height of 1100 kilometres (680 miles). It is very difficult to assign an upper limit to the earth's atmosphere. Atmospheric gases in an exceedingly tenuous condition probably extend hundreds if not thousands of miles above the earth's surface.

(This piece is extracted, here, from the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, Vol. 2, p. 508; and *Encyclopaedia International*, Vol. 2, p. 165).

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 23-24

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُواْ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُواْ شُهَدَاءكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And if you are in doubt of what We have sent down to Our (***faithful***) ***Servant*** (***Muhammad***)***, then bring forth one Surah the like thereof, and call your witnesses other than Allah, if you are truthful.*** (***2:23***)

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُواْ وَلَن تَفْعَلُواْ فَاتَّقُواْ النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

And if you do not do so, and you will never do it, then fear the Fire whose fuel is People and Stones, prepared for the infidels. (***2:24***)

Commentary

After Allah (SWT) explains the state of the hypocrite and disbelievers, and, through the creation of the heaven and the earth, sending down rain and growing plants on the ground, proves the existence of the Creator and Cherisher of the universe, He begins to validate the rightfulness of the Holy Qur'an and the truthfulness of His Messenger.

In order to show everyone the miraculousness of the Qur'an with clear evidence, according to one's portion of wit and understanding, that the Qur'an will be an argument for all, Allah confirms the prophet hood of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an by suggesting a challenge, a direct confrontation, not only to all the contemporaries of the Prophet (S) but also to men in all ages.

And if you are in doubt of what We have sent down to Our (***faithful***) ***Servant*** (***Muhammad***) (***2:23***).

It addresses all the rejectors, with a concrete test, saying that if you imagine that the Qur'an, which has been sent down from Pure Holiness to the chosen servant of Allah in the form of statements and with the combination of ordinary alphabetical letters, is not from Him and it is the word of a human, then since outwardly you are in the same state from the point of being a human as the Prophet of Islam (S) is, you should be able to produce a Surah like that of the Qur'an and call your own witnesses that are like you, the disbelievers of the Qur'an. You would compare your evidence with one of the Surahs of the Qur'an, even if it be a small one such as Surah al-Kawthar and the like. If those two were similar in comparison in all their qualities, merits and privileges, you could rightfully reject the legitimacy of the Qur'an.

The disbelievers and pagan Arabs, who were the masters of literature and eloquence, refrained from accepting this challenge despite their pride and haughtiness in eloquence and avoided the competition. Therefore, inevitably, they turned the literary contest into a bloody battle. Thus, getting killed was easier for them than being disgraced and defeated in a literary contest. The Arab literature became helpless and meagre against the challenge of the Qur'an. Neither those who lived at the time of the Qur'an's revelation, nor the people born in the centuries after that could bring anything like this Holy Book, or could do anything against it, in spite of trying with their utmost strength. They were thus forced to retreat after exerting utmost efforts.

Why is the Holy Qur'an a Miracle and How?

Being complete true revelation, the Qur'an is itself a miracle. As it is authentically known and also was mentioned in the above, at the time of the Qur'an's revelation the literary talent and eloquence of Arabs were at their peak, yet the miraculous ness of the Qur'an is not confined to its inimitable literary excellence and eloquence. It stands on its own innumerous different merits some of which are beyond the reach of the complete conception of the literary geniuses of the Arab world. It has such a rhetorical

capacity and linguistic excellence that is able to express different views and knowledge in a manner that is understood and appreciated by every rational human being of any standard and accomplishment of all the ages.

Then everybody in any time, once provided with the opportunity to become acquainted with the Holy Qur'an, which offers information by which all of his/her arguments will be completed, he/she can find himself or herself convinced by it. Such extensive knowledge and such power of expression are beyond the limitations of human ability. Even of the literate Arab people, as were previously referred to, especially at the time of the Qur'an's revelation when the literature of the Arabic language had reached its climax, none dared to bring a Surah similar to even its shortest one.

This very single point is the smallest miraculous aspect of the Qur'an.

There is no doubt that if the Qur'an were the word of a human and the Prophet (S), himself, who was known to the world as an illiterate one, had produced it, they would bring many Qur'ans like it and would prove that this is not the word of Allah revealed to him (S). In that condition, the enemies of Islam would maintain their works which would be available everywhere and, in any ages, so that they could publish and distribute them, even now, to defame the one genuine Qur'an, but there is none.

Apart from the inimitable literary excellence, the Holy Qur'an with its other names such as *'Furqan'* and *'Tibyan'* referring to the abilities it has, presents to the human world, definite prophecies fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled, and long after. It contains some facts about endowments in nature which the human knowledge of science as it progresses will have to understand, for its further advancement. The perfect ness of such nature naturally will be the last word with regard to the ideas, religious and social laws, sciences, and many, many other things that it contains and will remain forever, until the Hereafter.

This universality of the truth expressed in the idea and beauty and the attractive force of the language is so divine that, as we said before, it is beyond the reach of the expressive power of any limited being. It is in this regard that the Holy Qur'an claims to be not only the word of Allah, inimitable, but the Final Word in respect to truth and justice – the better or even the 1ike of it is impossible to be produced by anyone.

However, it is true to say simply and shortly that the Holy Qur'an is a miracle with respect to its contents which is the source of all knowledge and science, as it itself says:

***Say: 'If the sea were ink* (*wherewith to write out*) *for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be consumed before the words of my Lord are exhausted, though We were to bring the like of that* (*sea*) *to add thereto for its aid'* (*18: 109*).**

Thus, this verse, by itself, is a vital piece of evidence regarding the Correctness of the above said claim.[5]

Why Do Prophets Need Miracles?

We know that the Divine mission of prophethood is a great rank endowed upon some of the purified distinguished members of the human race. Since the purpose of prophethood is the comprehensive guidance ruling over the body and spirit of individuals, and society, toward perfection and the laying down of a legal system and social order for mankind, the assumption of responsibility involved is necessarily heavy and taxing. So, it requires great capacity and energy. Allah, therefore, bestows the position of prophethood on those who have the ability and capacity to receive and follow through the light of revelation.

This unique privilege and specialty of prophets is also shown in their miracles, which all of them had. And, to prevent some false, deceitful impostors from claiming the position, it is necessary that, besides the revelation, the real ones should have sufficient evidence to bear testimony to the truth of their declaration and prove the claim that they are sent by Allah. That is, a prophet should utter such words and exhibit such deeds which could not be uttered or performed by any natural means within the power of a finite being, such as: restoring the dead to life again, communicating with animals and inanimate bodies, and the likes of them. These supernatural events are termed as miracles.

The prophet who has a miracle should introduce it to people and invite them to challenge with it. If they can produce none similar to that, thus, by the means of his miracle, he proves the truthfulness of his declaration.

The Holy Qur'an, The Everlasting Miracle of the Prophet of Islam (S)!

Amongst the miracles issued by the Prophet of Islam (S), the *Qur'an* is the best remaining evidence of his rightfulness. We know, of course, that, according to what the leading scholars of Islam have said, he (S) had about 4440 miracles. But the Qur'an is a Book beyond the thoughts and mind of a mortal being. None has been able to bring one similar to it yet. It is a great heavenly miracle.

The reason that amongst all the miracles of the Messenger of Allah (S) the Qur'an has been chosen as the greatest remaining evidence of legitimacy of the Prophet of Islam (S) is that it is a miracle which is ***'expressive', 'everlasting', 'world-wide',*** and ***'spiritual'.***

Each of the former prophets ('a) had to accompany his miracle to prove its inimitability when he used to invite his opponents for challenging and bringing the like of it. In fact, his miracle or miracles could not express themselves and it was the explanations of the prophet that would complete them. This statement is also true for all the miracles of the Prophet of Islam (S) except the Holy Qur'an.

The Qur'an is a clear miracle which need not be introduced. It invites others to itself, demands the rejecters to challenge it while it defeats them, condemns them and it always stands victorious. That is why it, after passing centuries, viz., since the departure of the Prophet (S) up to the present, has been continuing its invitation the same as it did during his lifetime. It is both religion and miracle; law, and the

document of the law.

The Holy Qur'an, Global and Eternal

The reputation of the Holy Qur'an cleft the bonds of time and distance and influenced beyond them. The miracles of the prophets before the Prophet of Islam (S), and even his own miracles save the Qur'an, happened in a special period of time, at a definite place and for a specific group of people. For example: the utterances of the holy little child of Virgin Mary and raising the dead by Jesus ('a) were done at some definite times and places before the eyes of some particular people. And we know that regarding the things that depend on time and place, the farther we move away from them correlatively the weaker I they become. This is one of the properties of affairs related to time.

But the Holy Qur'an does not depend on time and place. Its brilliance and authority that illuminated the darkness of Arabia fourteen centuries ago continues unwaveringly to shine with its original splendour. Besides that, the passing of time, the advancement of science and the development of information have made it possible for us to understand it and take its advantages even more than the nations of former ages did. It is evident that what time and place cannot influence will continue to be everywhere in the world for eternity. It is also clear that a world-wide everlasting religion should have a world-wide everlasting document of legitimacy in its possession. Then we can discuss the Holy Qur'an:

- From the point of modern science;
- And the scientific explorations;
- And the rotation of the Earth;
- And reproduction in the plant kingdom;
- And general reproduction in all the particles of the world;
- And general gravity;
- And the surrendering of the Sun and the Moon;

- And the secrets of the creation of mountains;
- And the advent of the world;
- And the existence of life on other planets;
- And the winds, the pollinator of plants;
- And the question of the roundness of the Earth;[6]
- And many other scientific facts and knowledge about the world can be found in the Holy Qur'an, too.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 25

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِين آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُواْ مِنْهَا مِن ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقاً قَالُواْ هَـذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَأُتُواْ بِهِ مُتَشَابِهاً وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

***And** (**O' Muhammad**) **give glad tidings to those who have Faith and do good deeds that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are provided with fruits there from, they shall say: This is what we were provided with before! and they shall be given the like thereof, and there for them shall be spouses purified dwelling therein forever.** (**2:25**)*

Commentary

The Specialties of the Bounties in Heaven

In the aforementioned verse, the infidels and the rejecters of the Qur'an were severely threatened with a grave chastisement. Now, in this verse, to make the fact clear, by comparing the destinies of the two contradictory groups, as the style of the Qur'an is, the destiny of the true believers is referred to as the antithesis to the painful fate of the disbelievers.

First, it says:

And **(*O' Muhammad*)** ***give glad tidings to those who have Faith and do good deeds that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow…*** **(*2:25*)**

We know that those gardens that have not a permanent source of water and need to be occasionally irrigated are not so bountiful and pleasant because of frequent difficulties concerning their up keeping. The complete freshness is of those gardens which always have enough water easily available and within their reach. The water that belongs to them, making them self-sufficient, will never end. Then drought and shortage of water will never threaten them. The gardens of Heaven have such a condition. Then to point out the numerous kinds of fruit in those gardens, it says:

…Every time they are provided with fruits there from, they shall say: 'This is what we were provided with before!'… **(*2:25*)**

The commentators have cited some rather different commentaries concerning this statement:

Some of them have said that the objective meaning of this statement is that these blessings are for the good deeds they did formerly in the world. It was those deeds that were previously sent before them and the path was paved for them in the Hereafter.

Some others have asserted that when the Heavenly fruits are brought for them for the second time, they say that these fruits are the same as they had before, but when they eat them they sense a new taste and a fresh pleasure in them. Or, for example, when we eat grapes and apples in this world, every time we eat them or drink their juices they have basically the same tastes; but the fruits in Heaven will have a different taste every time they will be tasted, although they are apparently alike. This is one of the privileges of that world being as if there is no monotony in it!

Some have also said that it means that when they see the fruits of Heaven, they find them like the fruits in this world in order not to be odd and curious for them, but when they eat them they sense the flavour quite newly-tasting and excellent.

There is no controversy that the above statement refers to all these meanings and even to some other interpretations beyond them, because the words of the Qur'an sometimes bear several meanings.

Then it adds:

…and they shall be given the like thereof… **(*2:25*)**

That is, from the point of beauty and wholesomeness, all of the various Heavenly fruits are alike and they are at such a high standard that none of them can be preferred over others. They are not like the fruits in this world that some may be too ripe or aromatic while some others are, for example, too green or tasteless. The fruits in the gardens of Heaven, likening them with those of this world, are all pleasantly fragrant, delicious, wholesome, and beautifully interesting.

And finally, the last bounty, which is referred to in this verse, is ***'purified spouses',*** where it says:

...and there for them shall be spouses purified... (***2:25***)

The spouses are purified and are free from all the dirt and taints, bodily and spiritually, which they may have in this world.

One of the problems that man is confronted with, concerning the bounties in this world, is that at the same time that he possesses a bounty he thinks of its perdition and is worried about the time he is going to be in lack of it. For this very reason, the bounties in this world can never produce real tranquility for him. But the bounties in Heaven are eternal. They have no end and no perdition or discontinuation. They are full, complete, soothing and calming. So, to confirm this meaning, at the end of the verse, it says about the believers:

...dwelling therein forever (***2:25***)

Occasion of Revelation

On the occasion of the revelation of this verse, the leading commentators have narrated from Ibn Abbas as saying: *'This verse has been revealed on the virtue of Hadrat 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib* ('a) *and the true believers"*7 (since they have both 'Faith' and 'good deeds').

Explanations

1. Faith And Deeds

In many of the verses in the Qur'an, 'Faith' and 'good deeds' are mentioned to be so closely together that they seem to be inseparable. True, it is so because Faith and practice are complementary to each other.

If Faith influences the depths of man's soul, its radiance will certainly reflect in his acts and cause his deeds to become 'good deeds'. It is like a room wherein a bright light is kindled whose beams radiate outside through all the doors and windows. The same is the bright light of the lamp of Faith when it is glowing inside a man's enlightened heart. If this occurs, the light of that brilliant lamp of Faith radiates from his eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet.

Surah At-Talaq says:

...And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever... (***65:11***).

Also, Surah An-Nur says:

Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a

surety, grant them in the land, inheritance **(*of power*)** ***…*** **(*24:55*).**

Fundamentally, 'Faith' is as the root of a plant, and 'good deeds' are its fruit. The existence of pleasant, sweet fruit shows evidence to the soundness of the root which causes that useful fruit to be produced.

Some unbelieving persons may occasionally do some good deeds but that act will surely not be performed continuously. What is noble and certain to bring forth good deeds is the Faith that has penetrated the depths of man's soul and causes him/her to have a feeling of responsibility.

2. The Purified Spouses

It is interesting that the only epithet that is mentioned in this verse to qualify the Heavenly spouses is the attribute of 'purified'. This is an indication to the idea that the first and the most important status of a spouse is 'purity', and all good qualities other than that are totally out shown by its radiance.

The well-known tradition that is narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) makes this fact even clearer. He has said: *Avoid the green plants grown over dunghill.* The Messenger of Allah (S) was asked what he meant by 'the green plants grown over dunghill', and he answered: *It is the beautiful women who have grown up among filthy family members.*[8]

The word /azw-aj/ in the plural means mates – or wives – which in the case of the female sex means husbands. This may mean the faithful wives of the faithful husbands i.e., women who had been true and faithful believers in the truth and who had been the wives of the men who were also believers.

However, the women in Heaven, whether they are 'houri' (angels) or 'human creatures', are purified and clean both from the point of outward dirt such as: blood, urine, faeces, semen, menstruation, postpartum bleeding, excessive menstruation, dirtiness, and the like; and from the point of inward dirt such as: bad qualities of character, evil dispositions like: rancour, grudges, envy, habitual frowning, and the like of them; and also from the point of some hideous behaviours like: adultery, fornication, and all kinds of similar vices. They, having the total aspects and conditions of purification, are clean from all sorts of corruption and possess purity in its entirety.

Sa'id Ibn 'Amir has narrated a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) which says: *"If one of the women of Heaven looks once towards the earth the whole world will be full of perfume of musk and the radiance of her light will prevail over the light of the sun and the moon".*[9]

3. The Material and Spiritual Blessings in Heaven

In many of the verses of the Qur'an the words are about the blessings of Heaven, bounties such as, gardens beneath which rivers flow, castles, purified spouses, numerous fruits, loyal and faithful companions, etc.

But, besides these bounties, some other excellent blessings are also mentioned whose splendour and

magnificence is impossible to be estimated with the worldly criteria that we have. For example, Surah At–Tawbah says:

Allah has promised to Believers, men and women, Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allah: that is the supreme felicity. (***9:72***).

And, in Surah Al–Bayyinah after mentioning some material blessings in Heaven, it says:

…Allah is well–pleased with them and they are well–pleased with Him… (***98:8***)

And truly, if a person reaches the position that he feels his Lord; pleased with him and he is also pleased with Him, he will dismiss all other pleasures. He will attach only to Him and will think of none else. This is a spiritual pleasure that cannot be described with any words nor in any language.

Finally, since the Resurrection has both 'spiritual' and 'physical' aspects, the bounties in bliss have both of those aspects, too, in order hat their comprehensiveness be established and everyone, according to his/her worthiness and eligibility, will enjoy them.

Surah Al–Baqarah – Verse 26

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَسْتَحْيِي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلاً مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَـذَا مَثَلاً يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيراً وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيراً وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Allah does not disdain to set forth the parable even of a gnat, or anything greater than that. As for those who have Faith, they know that it is the truth from their Lord. And for those who reject Faith, they ask: 'What does Allah mean by this parable?' Thereby He leads many astray and guides many, and He leads none astray save the transgressors. (***2:26***)

Commentary

The purpose of a parable is to make the meaning of an abstract idea clearer and more explicit with the help of a material thing in order to assist the mind in catching the idea through consideration. The more man's wisdom is dependent on his base understanding; the less vigorous strength he has to conceive the spirit and reality of things when his imagination interferes. That is why that in the Divine Book and in the words of the wise and men of letters, the essence of meanings are stated in the form of parables to make complicated concepts plain, hence through a logical thing find a way to the philosophical.

A 'gnat' is a small insect which is perceptible by the naked eye. Gnat is mentioned in this verse, perhaps, to show that striking a similitude between small things or beyond it is not inappropriate for the Glorious Dignity of the Essence of Allah, but to confirm that the proportion of His Sovereignty is the

same over big or small, high or low and, in general, all are encompassed by His Power and are benefited by His endless Mercy and Grace. Furthermore, if we observe carefully, we will see that all the creatures, whether complex or simple, like a chain, are linked to one another. They are so interrelated and perform their duties with such surprising harmony and regularity that it is as if they have formed a single unit to take part in a general service.

The term 'gnat', in this verse, may refer to the greatness and fairness that is used in the creation of a gnat, this very small creature.

Concerning this meaning, there is a tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) who said: "*Verily, Allah* (*SwT*) *has set forth a parable of a gnat because He has created 'gnat', with that small size it has, consisting of all that He has created in an elephant with that bigness it possesses, and He has added two other limbs* (*for gnat*) *in order to stimulate* (*the attention of*) *the believers to notice the delicacy and frailness of His creation and His wonderful production.*"[10]

In another occurrence in the Qur'an, He (SWT) has said:

Do they not look at camels, how they are created? (***88:17***).

Upon the importance of the intriguing creation of living creatures, Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) in one of his sermons has said: *"...How could it be? Even if all the animals of the earth whether birds or beasts, stabled cattle or pasturing ones, of different origins and species, dull people and sagacious men – all jointly try to create* (*even*) *'a gnat' they are not able to bring it into being and do not understand what is the way to its creation. Their wits are bewildered and wandering. Their powers fall short and fail, and they return disappointed and tired, knowing that they are defeated and admitting their inability to produce it, also realizing that they are too weak* (*even*) *to destroy it..."*[11]

The verse continues saying:

...As for those who have Faith, they know that it is the truth from their Lord... (***2:26***)

Those who have believed in Islam and accepted the Word of Allah know that these miraculous statements are issued from the Origin of revelation. They know quite well that these parables are vivid and appropriate and are revealed from their Lord. They conceive the fact in this way because their hearts are empty of envy, grudges and pride and their souls are the site of the light of illumination and knowledge.

...And for those who reject Faith, they ask: 'What does Allah mean by this parable?'... (***2:26***)

Those who have disbelieved and covered the light of Faith with the curtain of infidelity have ultimately blinded their own insight. They have made their ears, which were able to hearken to the Divine Words, deaf. They, ignorantly or mockingly, inquire that what was Allah*'s* aim by giving this for a similitude that He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright.

In *Tafsir-al-Tibyan*, Shaykh Tusi says: “It is like that a speaker asks what Allah means by this parable that thereby some may be led astray and some be guided. In answer to this question, Allah says that none will be led astray save the transgressors; but the way is open to the believers to reach the climax of understanding and conception with knowledge and true Faith.”[12]

Occasion of the Revelation

When the previous verses, i.e., the verses that say:

The likeness of them is as the likeness of a man who kindled a fire… (***2:17***)

And:

Or (***their***) ***likeness is as a rainstorm from the heaven…*** (***2:19***)

were revealed, the hypocrites said that Allah is much exalted to bring forth these parables. So, to refuse their guise and statements, it says:

Allah does not disdain to set forth the parable even of a gnat or anything greater than that. (***2:26***)

Explanation

Some commentators have cited their ideas about the verse under discussion as follows:

The Arabic term /yudillu/ means: ‘misleading’. Wherever this word is used in the Qur’an, relating to Allah, it means the withdrawal of His Grace and allowing the individual to have the way of his own choice as a punishment, consequent to the individual’s rejecting the Divine Guidance voluntarily offered to him.

The Holy Qur’an presents the justification to the frequent metaphorical expressions in the form of parables, to stimulate the human mind and heart. The result is obvious: that a healthy mind grasps the Truth whereas the perverted mind increases its doubts as to what Allah meant by the parable. Thus, the one and the same expression has two opposite effects. The right impression is ‘guidance’ /hidayat/ which is assigned to’ the pious’ /muttaqin/, and the wrong impression is /dalalat/ ‘going astray’ which is allotted to the wrong-doers, and pointed out in the next verse. The two important characteristics of the wrong-doers are: the breach of the Covenant of Allah, after it has been confirmed and /qata’a ma amarallah/ i.e., the severing of the relation or the connection with what Allah has commanded man to establish and doing things subversive and harmful to the harmonious life on earth.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 27

الَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ أُولَـئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

Those who break the Covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined, and they make corruption on the Earth; – they are the losers. (***2:27***)

Commentary

The Real Losers!

In the aforementioned verse, the subject was partly based on the wrong–doers and their mischievous deeds. In this verse, these people are introduced clearly by three qualities:

Referring to the first quality it says:

Those who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation… (***2:27***)

Then, it refers to their second quality, saying:

…and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined… (***2:27***)

Many of the commentators have pointed out that this verse refers especially to the desertion of kinsfolk and breaking off ties of relationship. But careful attention to the concept of the verse leads us to a broader and more general meaning, in which the desertion of kinsfolk is one of its examples.

The evidence that supports the above idea is that the verse indicates that the makers of corruption cut the ties that Allah has commanded to remain fixed and firm. These joining ties cover the union of kindred, meeting of friends, social relationships, connections with the divine leaders, and relation with Allah. Therefore, we should not confine the meaning of the verse to a single idea alone.

In some Islamic narrations, however, the phrase: 'What Allah has commanded to be joined' is rendered in connection with Amir al– Mu'minin Imam 'Ali ('a) and the entire Ahl al–Bayt, the immaculate, ('a).

The third quality of the makers of corruption on the earth, which is lastly referred to in this verse, is:

…and they make corruption on the Earth… (***2:27***)

It is, of course, evident that they have neglected the path of Allah and disobeyed Him. These disbelievers, who do not observe mercy even towards their relatives, certainly treat others with cruelty. They pursue their own pleasures and personal interests. It does not matter to them where the society may be led. Their central aim is to increase their profit and to obtain their desires. They do not care if they must do any wrong or commit any offense to reach their goals. It is obvious how destructive the result of this kind of thinking and acting may be in the society.

The Qur'an, at the end of this verse, says:

…they are the losers. (***2:27***)

Truly, it is so. What a greater loss than this that a man spends his entire physical and spiritual capital on the way to the destruction and disaster of his own life!

What fate can they have save this dreadful one when some people step out of the circle of obedience to Allah*'s* Command to the extent of the meaning of the term /fisq/ 'mischief'?

Mischief, in Islam, is one the most abhorred crimes, as the Qur'an says:

Mischief is more grievous than murder (***2:217***).

This is one of the many indications that Islam stands for peace on earth and never tolerates anything which disturbs it.

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1. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 41.
2. Tawhid al-Mufaddal (Theism), p. 1, (Persian version).
3. Other meanings of the sky will be dealt with when discussing verse 29 of the current Surah. Explanation about the atmosphere, when commenting on verse 22, is helpful, too.
4. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 41.
5. O' dear respected reader of this book! Have you ever thought that when more than two-thirds of the globe is covered with sea water and if we consider it twice as much when we use it entirely as ink in order to write out the science and secrets of the Qur'an, i.e. the word of Allah, sooner would the doubled oceans of the globe be exhausted than would the words of Allah, the science and secrets of the Qur'an? Then be careful when considering how magnificent the Glorious Qur'an is!
6. For details, refer to: 'The Holy Qur'an and the Last Prophet (S)', p. 147, (Persian version).
7. Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 89, and Tafsir al-Burhan, Vol. 1, p. 70.
8. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, Vol. 14, p. 19.
9. Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 199.
10. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 46, Tradition 65.
11. Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 186.
12. Tafsir-al-Tibyan, Vol. 1, page 19, Shaykh Tusi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 3 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 28 - 39

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتاً فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

How can you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then again restore you to life, and unto Him you will be returned? (***Therefore, neither your life nor your death is in your will; what you have is Allah's.*** (***2:28***)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاء فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth, then turned (***His Will***) ***to heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens, for He is All-Knowing of all things.*** (***2:29***)

Commentary

The Mysterious Bounty of Life!

In these couple of verses, through a series of the Divine blessings and some of the marvelous phenomena of creation, the Holy Qur'an attracts man's attention to the Lord of the world and His Magnificent Sovereignty. It very clearly completes the undisputable evidence set forth for the acknowledgment of Allah's Omnipotence that was previously cited in verses 21 and 22.

It must be remembered that the correct conception of Allah is the basic need for proper faith. This faith serves as guidance from the main generative source (Allah) for the whole system of religion. The most practical method of acquiring this basic knowledge about the existence of the Essence of Allah is to carefully observe and thoughtfully reflect on the creation which is before our own eyes. This is a point that nobody can deny or express any doubt about. This method is repeatedly impressed and demanded in the Holy Qur'an. The course adopted in the Holy Qur'an to educate man is the most scientific and the most modern one, i.e. of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract.

At first it inquires:

How can you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life... (***2:28***)

The Qur'an reminds all individuals that formerly they were inanimate like the pieces of stone, wood, and the like of them. The water of life had not been poured on you and the breeze of vitality had not blown through the garden of your being to open the blossom of your lifetime in the realm of your entity.

Now, you are gifted with the bounty of life and you are actually living. Numerous organs and limbs, and various integral systems of sensing to form conceptions are bestowed upon you. Who has given you this very blessing of life and being? Did you yourself give it to your own self?

It is clear that every rational person will unhesitatingly confess that this blessing is not from his own origin, but it has come from a knowing, mighty source, the *One* Who knows all its secrets and its complicated arrangements; and Who is able to design it totally. In this case there will arise the question

of why you deny the ***One Who*** has granted you life.

Today, it has been proven by the scientists of the world that there is not anything more complicated than the phenomenon of life. Man has surprisingly gained a great deal of successful progress in the field of science, in general, and experimental natural science, in particular, but the secret of the riddle of life has not been uncovered yet. This subject is so mysterious that it has remained inexplicable for millions of learned individuals whose thoughts and efforts have been left fruitless in conceiving it. Possibly, in the future, under the light of further scientific development, man will gradually become more acquainted with the secrets of life. But the main question is: Can anybody ascribe such an extraordinarily delicate and precise phenomenon, which is full of mysteries and is in need of superior knowledge and power for itself, to the irrational nature, which itself does not have 'life' from its own?

That is why we say the phenomenon of life, in the world of nature, is the greatest evidence for the affirmation of the existence of Allah about which abundant books have been compiled. The Qur'an, in the above verse, emphasizes on the very matter, too.

After the citation of this bounty, it refers to another vivid example, i.e., the phenomenon of death. It says:

…then He will cause you to die… (***2:28***)

Everybody usually sees that his relatives, kinsfolk, acquaintances, companions, and friends die one after another, and their lifeless bodies are buried in the soil. This actual circumstance is also a station of contemplation: Who took their beings from them? If their beings were theirs by themselves, they would be eternal. When it is taken from them, it is further proof that life is bestowed upon them by someone else.

True, the 'Bestower of life' is the' Bestower of death', as the Qur'an says:

He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed… (***67:2***).

The Qur'an, after providing these two clear statements as proof for the Essence *of* Allah in order to make the soul of man disposed to grasp other problems, refers to the subject of Resurrection and being restored to life after death. It says:

…then again restore you to life… (***2:28***).

This phenomenon of life after death, indeed, is not so surprising because it is not unfamiliar and man has formerly seen the same situation in nature. Therefore, regarding the first statement, viz. 'the enlivening of the inanimate', the acceptance of raising the dead after the decomposition of the body, it is not so difficult, but it is easier than the first time He created man; (although the easiness and hardness is meaningless for the Essence Whose Power is infinite).

It is odd that there have been some people who have been doubtful about man's life after death. They

believe that the first life has originated from some inanimate things.

It is interesting that the above verse has made everything, from the beginning to the end, manifest before the eyes of man. In a short argument, it has expressed the advent of life to its last point in this, world, death, and then the Resurrection is illustrated for him.

The objective meaning of the phrase

Unto Him you will be returned (***2:28***)

is returning to Allah*'s* blessings; that is, you will return to the blessings of Allah in the Hereafter. The witness to this meaning is Surah Al–'An'am which says:

…As to the dead, Allah will raise them up; then will they be turned unto Him (***6:36***).

The objective of

Unto Him you will be returned (***2:28***)

may be a reality more delicate and fragile than that. It is to say that: all creatures, in the process of development, begin from the station of non–existence, the zero point, and go forth towards 'infinite', which is the Pure Essence of Allah. Thus, the path of development does not end with death, but, in the Hereafter, man will continue his life again, miserably, or prosperously with a higher standard of living to pave the path of his further development.

Conclusion

The Arabic term / kuntum /, (the second person plural), applied in the above verse, may address the human ego which was not as it is now as a conscious entity. The previous state is termed as 'being dead', brought into the present conscious state, by Allah's means of 'enlivening'. The departure of the conscious self from the body is termed death appointed by Allah. The state of the human cognitive self, after its departure from the body, is termed as the 'enlivening' and from that state proceeding to the other states, up to the Infinite point of the return to Allah. This shows that once our life begins; there is no reversion or regression. It is the continuous process from one state to the next, dying from the previous state and entering life into the succeeding one. Be the succeeding state pleasant or painful, it is the evolutionary consequence of the preceding state.

Also, this single verse alone denotes the continuous evolutionary transformation and the transcendence of a conscious human entity up to the communion with the Infinite, not in the sense of annihilation or the absorption of the finite into the infinite, but in the sense of the realization of the fact that nothing is real but the One, the Cause of all causes: the Essence of Allah, the Exalted.

After mentioning the blessing of life and pointing to the' Origin and End', it refers to another Divine

bounty from among the immense bounties of Allah. It says:

It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth… (***2:29***).

In this manner, it specifies the worthiness of the existence of man and his high mastership over all beings in the earth. It is just this very matter that clarifies for us that Allah has created Man for a very worthy and magnificent affair. It is so important, that everything in the world is created for him! What is he created for? Yes, he is the most excellent being in the world of existence and the worthiest of all. A partial explanation will also be provided when commenting on verses 30–33 of the current Surah.

It is not this verse alone that defines the majestic position of Man but there are also abundant verses in the Holy Qur'an that reveal the same and introduce Man as the main goal of the whole world of creation; for example:

And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on the earth… (***45:13***).

Some further instances from the verses of the Holy Qur'an are as follows:

…Who hath made the ships subject to you… (***14:32***)

…and the rivers (***also***) ***hath He made subject to you…*** (***14:32***).

…and the Night and the Day hath He also made subject to you. (***14:33***).

It is Allah Who has subjected the sea to you… (***45:12***).

And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon… (***14:33***).

On this subject, we will have some explanations later, too, when commenting upon Surah Ar–Ra'd, 13:2, and Surah Ibrahim 14:32 and 14:33.

Again, it turns to the concept of monotheism and says:

…then turned (***His Will***) ***to heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens; for He is All–knowing of all things.*** (***2:29***)

The Seven Firmaments

The word /sama/, as opposed to /' ard / 'the earth', in the lexicon means: 'to be lofty, upward'. This is a collective meaning which encompasses numerous concepts, in which some of the dimensions were formerly mentioned.[1] But what is the objective meaning of the phrase 'seven heavens' here? The Islamic scholars and the commentators of the Holy Qur'an have offered different arguments on the subject, but the important idea, which seems to be the most correct is that the purpose of 'seven heavens' is its very actual meaning of 'seven firmaments'.

Yet, from the verses of the Qur'an, it is understood that the whole of celestial bodies: planets and fixed stars that we can see, are totally in the first heaven, and there are six other heavens that are not visible to us and even our modem scientific equipment are not able to show them. Therefore, there are, on the whole, seven firmaments which make up the very 'seven heavens'.2

The evidence to this statement is the words of the Qur'an where it says:

...And We adorned the lower heaven with lights... (***41:12***)

In another occurrence it says:

We have indeed decked the lower heaven with beauty (***in***) ***the stars...*** (***37:6***)

These verses clearly indicate that what we see in the sky, which are generally called stars, are completely located in the first heaven. Beyond this heaven, there are six other heavens about whose details we do not have any exact data at present.

The reason why we said that there are six other heavens which are unknown to us yet, and science may realize them in the future, is that human knowledge is still incomplete. The more developed it becomes, the more new surprising facts about the creation it discovers. For instance, the science of astronomy has now reached a point where earthly telescopes are incompetent and satellites equipped with powerful radars and specific means for the purpose, are utilized instead. What the great astronomical observatories and the modern equipment with the help of spacecrafts and scientific excavations have discovered, in the Arc of Descent, is a distance as far as about one thousand million (a billion) light years away from us wherein they have discovered innumerable solar systems other than ours. The astronomers themselves have confessed that this is just the beginning of the way of the world, not the end of it, and the discovery of further such systems is yet expected with the successful invention of or the enhanced structure of stronger telescopes or more advanced means of celestial excavations. Therefore, there is no doubt that, in the future, with the further progress in astronomy and science, other galaxies and firmaments, or the like, might be discovered.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 30-33

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّى جَاعِلٌ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوٓا۟ أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ ٱلدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّىٓ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am appointing on the earth a deputy', they said: 'Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? while we celebrate Your Praise and extol Your Holiness?' He said: 'Surely, I know what you know not'. (***2:30***)

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الأَسْمَاء كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلاَئِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاء هَـؤُلاء إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And He taught Adam all the names, then He presented them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right'. (***2:31***)

قَالُواْ سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

They said: 'Glory be to You! of knowledge we have naught save what you have taught us. Surely, you (***alone***) ***are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise'.*** (***2:32***)

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنبِئْهُم بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

He said: 'O' Adam, tell them their names'. And when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not say unto you that I surely know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and (***that***) ***I know what you reveal and what you were hiding?***' (***2:33***)

Commentary

Man, Allah's Deputy on Earth!

Through the previous verses we have understood that Allah has created all the endowments on the earth for Man, whereas in these verses the leadership and vicegerency of Man is formally proclaimed. Thus, here, Man's spiritual rank and worthiness of all these merits, are exposed.

In these verses, which begin from verse No. 30 and end with verse 39, the creation of Adam (the first human) is referred to, and the following three fundamental subjects are set forth:

1. Allah informs the angels about man's vicegerency on the earth and their questioning of Him.

2. Angels are commanded to prostrate before the first human, Adam. This situation is referred to in numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an concerning different circumstances.

3. The illustration of the situation of Adam and his life in Heaven and the events causing him to be sent out from Heaven, and then, his repentance and the order that he and his

children were to live on the earth, are pointed out.

The verses under discussion speak about the first stage. It was His Will, so He created a being on the earth to be His vicegerent. The attributes of this deputy would be a reflection from the rays of Allah Attributes, and his position somehow higher than that of the angels. It was His Will that the earth and all its endowments, i.e. forces, treasures, mines, and all its potentials be subjected to the will of such a human being.

Such a being must have a vast share of wisdom, intelligence, conception and a special capacity so that he can undertake the leadership and mastership of the earthly beings.

Therefore, in the first verse, it says:

When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am appointing on the earth a deputy' (***2:30***)

According to what the leading Islamic scholars and learned men, and experts in, have said, the objective meaning of 'khalifah' (deputy) is the divine vicegerent on the earth, because the question which the angels asked later, saying that the human race may make mischief and shed blood on the earth while they (the angels) celebrate His Praise, reinforces this very meaning, that Allah vicegerency on the earth is incompatible with these deeds.

Also, teaching the names to Adam, whose explanation you will read in the following verses, is good evidence supporting this claim. Again, the angels' humility and veneration before Adam is another witness to this idea.

However, Allah was pleased to create a being above all the creatures of the universe, the best creation, appropriate for being a Divine vicegerent, Allah*'s* Deputy on the Earth.

Commenting on these verses, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in a tradition has referred to the same meaning and said that the angels, after recognizing the position of Adam, realized that he and his children deserved to be the deputies of Allah on the earth and serve as His guidance among peoples.[3]

Then, in the current verse, the angels put forth a question, in order to understand the reality and not to protest, as it says:

...they said: 'Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? while we celebrate Your Praise and extol Your Holiness?'... (***2:30***)

But, here in this verse, Allah's answer to them is a complicated reply whose details will be given in later verses.

...He said: 'Assuredly I know what you know not' (***2:30***)

As it is realized from their words, the angels had comprehended that this human was not a docile one: he makes mischief, sheds blood, does wrong, etc. But how did they know it?

It is sometimes said that Allah had previously told the angels the future of Man in brief, while some others have cited that maybe the angels had comprehended the idea themselves from the term /fil'ard/ (on the earth). They knew that Man would be created from soil; and, because of the complexity of 'matter', naturally it is the center of conflict and difficulties. For, this limited world of matter cannot satiate the avaricious nature of human beings, even if the whole world were given to a single one, he would not be satisfied. This status can sometimes be the main cause of mischief and bloodshed particularly when there is not enough sense of responsibility.

Some of the other commentators believe that the predication of the angels resulted from the fact that Adam was not the first human creature on the earth, but, before him, there had also been some other humans who had lived on the earth and had committed corruption and shed blood. This bad record caused the angels' suspicion about Adam and his descendants.

These three commentaries are not so contradictory to one another; viz, they, comprehensively, may have caused the attention of the angels to be attracted towards this subject. And, incidentally, this fact that they expressed was never denied by their Lord in His answer to them, but, besides this fact, He pointed out that there were some other more important facts about man and his capabilities that the angels did not know.

They thought that if the purpose were only for worshipping and servitude, they would be the best examples, because they were always praising Him and were the most appropriate ones for being the vicegerents! They did not consider that when lusts, wrath and various desires have no chance to influence on their behaviours and selves, their worshipping is different from the servitude and worshipping of Man whose lusts and desires have surrounded him and Satan's temptations attack him from every side. What a long distance there is between the obedience of this feeble being and the adoration of those holy and pure angels!

They did not know that in the seed of Adam there would come such great prophets as Muhammad (S), Abraham ('a), Noah ('a), Moses ('a), Jesus ('a), and some Imams as the twelve sinless Imams (Ahl al-Bayt) ('a) in addition to many pious believers, martyrs, and a great many men and women who lovingly donated the whole of their properties in the way of Allah. There would be some off springs of Adam whose one hour of contemplation is equal to years of worshipping of the angels.

It is noteworthy that the angels emphasized on three aspects about their characteristics: /tasbih/ (glorification), /hamd/ (praise, eulogy) and /taqdis/ (sanctification). Undoubtedly, both the first and the second mean: celebrating His Praises and knowing Him and His Glory absolutely pure and perfect, free from any impurity or imperfection or from anything derogatory. But what is the main objective meaning of /taqdis/ 'sanctification'? Some have considered it as the purification of Allah from any imperfection which

is, in fact, an emphasis again on the very meaning of /tasbih/ 'glorification'.

Some others believe that the term /taqdis/ is derived from the root /quds/ which means: 'to purify the earth from the wicked and corruptors', or 'to purify oneself from anything bad, evil and immoral in order to clarify the soul and body for the sake of Allah'. They have considered the term /laka/ (for you) in the phrase /nuqaddisu-laka/, we extol Your Holiness (for you)', as its witness. The angels did not say: 'we extol You', but they meant to say: 'we purify ourselves and assist those who obey You, for You, or towards You'.

In fact, they wanted to say: if the purpose is obedience and servitude, they are obedient; and if it is worship, they are always busy doing it; and if the purpose is the purification of themselves or throughout the expanse of the earth, they are doing that too. But this matter-made human is both immoral, himself, and makes mischief on the earth.

To clarify the facts completely for the angels. He set them on trial in order that they themselves might confess that there was a great difference between them and Adam.

Angels on Trial

Adam, being given effective faculties by Divine favour, had an extraordinary receptive potential for the facts of the world of being, and as the Qur'an says:

And He taught Adam all the names... (***2:31***)

The commentators, from the point of view of their various styles of, have delivered different ideas on the phrase 'teaching names', but it is certain that its aim is not that of teaching some insignificant words or meaningless 'names', because this could not be counted an honour for Adam. The aim is teaching the nature of these names and the concepts and the things that they refer to.

Of course, this acknowledgement of the nature and the facts of the world of creation and the secrets of the world of being with its different properties in different creatures was a great honour for Adam.

It is narrated in a tradition that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked about the meaning of this verse and he ('a) said: *"The purpose* (*of names*) *is lands, mountains, valleys, riverbeds* (*and on the whole, all things*). *Then he looked at the rug under him and said that even that rug was among the things He taught Adam."*[4]

Therefore 'teaching names' has not been something like teaching words but it refers to the philosophy and secrets of the properties and qualities of things. He taught Adam this knowledge in order that he could use the merits and advantages of this world alongside the path of his development towards perfection.

He (SWT) also taught him the capacity of language learning and the skill of writing with its proper

application to be able to nominate objects and whenever he needs them, instead of showing them, he merely calls their names. This is a very great bounty of the Lord bestowed on man. We can comprehend the importance of this subject when we observe that what modern science and human beings have is under the shade of the existence of language and writing. All the scientific and cultural, historical ancient records have been kept and preserved as treasures in man's written collections generation after generation. If he could not use language and pen, it would be impossible for him to convey the knowledge and experimental data from old generations to the recent nations and the coming ones.

…then He presented them before the angels and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right' (***2:31***)

But the angels, who were in lack of such knowledge, failed in that trial and could, not pass the divine examination successfully. So, their response to Him was such:

They said: 'Glory be to You! Of knowledge we have naught save what You have taught us… (***2:32***)

…surely, You (***alone***) ***are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.*** (***2:32***)

They said that they did not know anything regarding this matter and their question was simply because of their lack of knowledge. They were unaware of the capacity and wonderful power of Adam (‘a), his God-given endowment. It was a great privilege to him above the angels. They accepted that Adam (‘a) really deserved to be the vicegerent of Allah on the earth and in the world of all beings, where without him, the whole creation would remain incomplete.

Then, it was Adam's turn, by the command of Allah and in the presence of angels to speak and explain the names and secrets of beings in His creation along with the insight to the knowledge of the realities or the latent properties or the hidden native endowments in each of them.

He said: 'O Adam, tell them their names,' and when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not say unto you that I surely know the unseen things of heavens and the earth, and (***that***) ***I know what you reveal and what you were hiding?'*** (***2:33***)

Allah, having the knowledge of all the hidden things of the heavens and the earth, knew also what the angels did hide in their imaginations, which was that they deemed themselves more deserving of the high office of being the Deputy of Allah among His creation. This belief of the angels made them inquire into the Divine Will about Adam's being the vicegerent.

But when Adam (‘a) spoke and the angels observed that surprising glory in him, they respected Adam for the vast knowledge and immense information and worthiness that radiated from him. Thus, it was made clear for them that it was only Adam (‘a) who was apt enough to be His deputy on the Earth.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 34 – 36

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ فَسَجَدُواْ إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam.' They all prostrated themselves except Iblis; he refused and was full of pride, and so he became one of the infidels. (***2:34***)

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلاَ مِنْهَا رَغَداً حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الْظَّالِمِينَ

And We said: 'O' Adam, dwell you and your spouse in the Garden and eat of the plentiful therein (***both of you***) ***wherever you desire, but do not approach this tree, lest you become one of the unjust'.*** (***2:35***)

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ

But Satan caused them to fall there from and brought them out from the state (***of felicity***) ***in which they had been. And We said: 'Get down all of you, and be enemies one of another, and for you on the earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood – for a time'.*** (***2:36***)

Commentary

Adam in the Garden

In the former statements, the high rank and glory of Man was discussed. Now, in these verses, another aspect of the subject is dealt with. At first, to call upon our minds, the Qur'an says:

And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam.' They all prostrated themselves except Iblis; he refused and was full of pride... (***2:34***)

Yes, he was proud and it was for this very pride that he became one of the unbelievers:

...and so he became one of the infidels... (***2:34***)

It should be noted that the above verse is the most valid piece of evidence and a vivid witness to the magnificence and nobility of Man whom, after his being created, all the angels were commissioned to make obeisance and pay homage to, and bow before that splendid creation. He was really appropriate for the position of being the divine deputy and His vicegerent on the earth. This one, who had such a

high glorious rank, that was apt to bring up, from his seed, some refined and respectful children, some of whom would be prophets, was worthy of such obeisance and honour.

You may consider the position of an ordinary learned person who knows some definite formulas in a branch of science and think of how immensely we respect him. Then, the position of Adam with all of his glory and vast knowledge about the world of being is obvious.

Explanations

Why Did Iblis Disobey?

We know that 'satan' is a common noun that envelops both the first Satan and all other satans. But 'Iblis' is a proper noun which refers to the same one that tempted Adam ('a).

According to the verses of the Qur'an, Iblis was not of the same nature as the angels, but he was from a different genus i.e. of the Jinn, of the nature of matter, who had been assembled among the angels. One of the verses wherein Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn is as follows:

And when said We unto the angels: 'Prostrate ye unto Adam': then they (all) prostrated but Iblis, he was of Jinn... **(*18:50*).**

His motive in this disobedience was pride and a special bigotry which had dominated his behaviour. He imagined that he was superior to Adam ('a) and he should not have been ordered to prostrate himself before him ('a). He thought Adam should prostrate before him. The explanation of this idea will be discussed later, in comments referring to Surah al-A'raf, 7:12.

The cause of his blasphemy was also that he considered the wise command of Allah rather inappropriate. He not only disobeyed practically but also protested theoretically. Thus, his pride and self-conceit annulled a lifetime of his worshipping and rendered it worthless! Beware; pride has many effects of 'this kind'!

The phrase:

***...so, he became one of the infidels* (*2:34*)**

shows that before this command, too, he had changed his path from the path of angels and obeying the command of Allah and had had ideas resulting from pride in mind.

Perhaps, he had told himself that if the order of obeisance were given to him, he would certainly never obey it. The phrase: ***'...what you conceal'***, in verse 2:33, may hint to this meaning. This idea is also referred to in a tradition from Imam Hasan 'Askari, the eleventh Imam ('a), cited in *Tafsir al-Qummi*.[5]

Was the Prostration for Allah or for Adam?

There is no doubt that /sajdah/ or a formulated prostration with the purpose of worshipping is deserved by none *but* Allah alone and the meaning of 'Unity of Worship' means the same: that we worship and make obeisance to none else other than Allah, or it will be 'shirk', (i.e. associating the object with Allah). Therefore, it is beyond doubt that the infallible beings like the angels prostrated themselves for Allah, but it was for the creation of such a splendid being, Adam, that they obeyed Him by prostrating. Or, if they prostrated for Adam, their prostration was a kind of 'obeisance' not an act of worshipping.

In the book' *'Uyun al-Akhbar'* by Shaykh al-Saduq, it is cited that Imam 'Ali Ibn Musa ar-Ridha' ('a) said: *"The angels' prostration was for the adoration of worshipping* Allah*, on one side, and for the obeisance and respect of Adam* ('a)*, on the other side, because we* (*Ahl al-Bayt*) *were in his seed."*[6]

However, after that episode with Iblis and the trial of the angels, Adam was ordered that he and his spouse ought to abide in Paradise:

***And We said: 'O' Adam, dwell you and your spouse in the Garden and eat of the plentiful therein* (*both of you*) *wherever you desire, but do not approach this tree, lest you become one of the unjust'.* (*2:35*)**

It is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an that Adam ('a) was created to live on the earth, this very terrestrial globe, but, at the beginning He had temporarily placed him (and his wife) in a beautiful and prosperous Garden, bountiful with blessings and free from any trouble and incommodity.

This arrangement occurred, maybe, because Adam was not acquainted with the process of living on the earth. It was difficult for him to tolerate immediately all the troubles therein. Therefore, at first, he was to obtain some more information about the kind of life to expect on the earth, and hence, it stood to reason that he should remain for a length of time in the Garden and learn the necessary skills there in order to find out that life on earth is accompanied with accepting some responsibilities and performing some duties whose accomplishments would bring his felicity, development and continuity of blessings, whereas, their refusal would cause him to be involved with pain and hardship.

Also, he must know that although he has been created free, this freedom is limited. He cannot do whatever he wishes, but he must do without some of the things existing in this world for his own good.

And again, he need know that it is not so that if he does a wrong or an err all the doors of felicity and happiness will be closed to him. He can return and repent and promise not to do anything against the order of Allah, and in such a case, when his repentance is accepted, he will return to the divine blessings.

Adam ('a) had to remain in that environment to gain some experience in order to be able to recognize his friend and his enemy, to learn how to live on the earth. Yes, there were a series of skills which were

necessary for him to learn before stepping onto the earth.

Those were the things that both Adam (‘a) and his children needed for their future lives. Hence, the one who was created to be the vicegerent of Allah on the earth might stay in the Garden, perhaps, so that some instructions could be given to him for his information and practical use.

The following enlightening paragraph cited in *al–Mizan* upon the idea may also be mentioned here.

“It should not be overlooked that even when Allah pardoned them (the couple) after their repentance, He did not return them to the Garden – they were sent down to the earth to live therein. If their eating of the tree, the coveting of their private parts and the life of this world were not a confirmed divine plan, and an irrevocable predetermined decree, they would have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as they were forgiven for their mistake. In short, it was the divine plan that they should spend some time in the Garden to get them prepared for the life in this world; and their removal from the Garden, according to the causal relation decreed by Allah, was caused by their eating from the forbidden tree and becoming aware of their nakedness, and this happened because they listened to the whispering of Satan.”[7]

Adam found himself in a position that it was best for him to follow the instruction of Allah about restraining from eating of the forbidden tree. The whisperer, Satan, had sworn to be busy whispering and making Adam (‘a) and his children stray. As some other verses of the Qur’an indicate, Satan assured Adam (‘a) that if he and his wife ate from that tree they would become angels and would live in the Garden forever. Satan even swore to them both that he was their sincere adviser:

…Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you, (***7:21***).

But Satan caused them to fall there from, and brought them out from the state (***of felicity***) ***in which they had been…*** (***2:36***)

Yes, they were removed from the Garden where they had been in ease and tranquility, far from any pain and trouble. This event took place as the direct result of the effect of Satan’s deceit.

Then the Qur’an says:

…and We said: ‘Get down all of you and be enemies one of another…’ (***2:36***)

In this enmity, Satan was on one side, and Adam (‘a) and his wife were on the other side.

…and for you on the earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time’. (***2:36***)

It was at this time that Adam (‘a) realized that he had really done injustice to himself, because he was removed from the Garden for his submission to the whispers of Satan, and was to sojourn in a place full

of pain, toil, and trouble. True that Adam (‘a) was a prophet and was immaculate, but, as we will discuss later, if a prophet commits an err; Allah will react severely towards him as if an ordinary person had committed it. It is the same for the ordinary people when they commit sins.

The Heavy Forfeit Paid by Adam

The Late Allamah Tabatabaie pointed out his point of view about this subject concerning Adam (‘a) and his spouse as follows:

“The injustice or wrong that they had done was against their own selves; it was neither a sin (as this term is used in the Shari’ah) nor an injustice against Allah. It shows that the prohibition was in the nature of advice, pointing out to them what was good for their own comfort; it did not have the force of an ordained law. Adam and his wife did wrong to themselves, because their disregard for that divine advice caused their removal from the Garden.

When a man commits a sin (i.e. offence, from the Shari’ah point of view), he is given a punishment. Then if he repents and his repentance is accepted, the punishment is completely removed, and he is returned to his previous position as though he had not committed the sin at all. If Adam (‘a) and his wife were guilty of such a sin, they should have been returned to their place in the Garden soon after their repentance was accepted. But it was not done. It clearly shows that the prohibition did not have the force of an ordained law; it was only advice. Even so, neglecting it had its natural effect on both of them, and they had to leave the Garden. But this removal from the Garden was not a punishment for any sin or crime; it was the natural consequence of the wrong they had done against their own selves.”[8]

For a more detailed explanation about the subject, an expressive narration from Hazrat Ridha’, the eighth Imam (‘a), mentioned in *‘Uyun al-’Akhbar*, p. 108 and 109 which is also referred to in *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 11, pp. 78 and 104, can be studied, as well as another one on p. 156 from Imam al-Baqir (‘a). Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, in his well-known: *At Tafsir al-Kashif*, Vol. 1, pp. 84-86 has also cited some considerable details upon the matter. All of these references can surely be helpful in clarification of the meaning.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 37-39

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِن رَّبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

Then Adam received (***certain***) ***words from his Lord. And He turned towards him*** (***mercifully***). ***Truly He is Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful.*** (***2:37***)

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ مِنْهَا جَمِيعاً فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

We said: 'Get you down from it, all together; until there shall come to you a guidance from Me, for whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve'. (***2:38***)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

But those who reject Faith and deny Our Signs, they are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling therein forever. (***2:39***)

Commentary

Adam's Return to Allah

After the temptation of Iblis and the removal of Adam from the Garden, Adam realized that he had truly done injustice to himself when he was removed from that quiet environment full of bounties as a result of the temptation of Iblis and was placed on the earth, a grievous environment full of toil and pain. At this time, Adam thought of compensation for his mistake and earnestly attended to the Lord with his whole heart and soul, but with a great deal of regret and penitence.

At the same time, the Mercy of Allah was bestowed on him with 'some effective words' by the means of which Adam repented, and He accepted his repentance mercifully; as the Qur'an says:

Then Adam received (***certain***) ***words from his Lord. And He turned towards him*** (***mercifully***)*...* (***2:37***)

It did happen because:

*...**Truly He is Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful.*** (***2:37***)

The term /tawbah/ originally means: 'to return'. In the statements of the Qur'an, it means: 'to return from sin'. This meaning is applied when it refers to a sinful person. But, sometimes, the term is used when concerning Allah. In this case, it means 'to return to His Mercy'; that is, the mercy which a person was deprived of because of committing sin. When a sinful one returns to the path of obedience and worship, He returns that Mercy to him/her, too. That is why the Lord is attributed as 'Oft-Returning', too.

By the way, it should be noted that the Arabic word / Tawbah /, which is generally understood as 'repentance', does not imply the mere utterance of any verbal prayers. It demands a real and active change in the behaviour as well as the active attitude of the individual towards the purity of his/her life. It demands a moral conversion with a strong and definite determination on the part of the repenting individual, never again to return to the mistake or the wrong that had been committed before.

In other words, the term / Tawbah / 'repentance' is a word commonly used both for Allah and His servants. When it is used for the servants of Allah, it means that 'they have returned to their Lord',

because any sinner, in fact, has abandoned his Lord, and when the servant repents, he/she returns to Him.

When servants fail to obey their Lord, it seems that they cause Him, also, to turn away from them. When Allah is attributed with / Tawbah /, it means that He returns His Mercy and Favour to them.

It is true that Adam, indeed, did not do any unlawful thing against the Lord, but that very mistake was counted a. ***'a comparative wrong'*** regarding him. Adam (ʿa) immediately felt his condition and returned to his Lord. He repented by the means of the 'words' he received, and his repentance was accepted. But what the nature of the 'words' was will be discussed separately under the title of 'Explanation'.

Anyhow, Adam's repentance was accepted but not abstaining from the use of the fruit of the prohibited tree which had a potential innate effect ultimately resulted in the form of his settlement on the earth. This consequence remained unchanged for the couple, as the above verses say:

We said: 'Get you down from it, all together; until there shall come to you a guidance from Me, for whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve'. (***2:38***)

But those who reject Faith and deny Our Signs, they are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling therein forever. (***2:39***)

Explanation: The 'Words' Adam (ʿa) Learnt from the Lord

Commentators have cited different ideas commenting on the quality and the meaning of the ***'words'*** that Allah taught Adam (ʿa).

Mere common sense suggests that what was bestowed upon Adam by the All-Knowing, All-Merciful Lord could not have been anything of an ordinary prayer. It must have been something very special or extraordinary which the All-Merciful Himself bestowed upon him by means of which Adam (ʿa) or anyone could unfailingly invoke the Mercy of the Lord after having displeased Him.

It is popularly accepted that the 'words' were the same words and meanings revealed in Surah Al-'A'raf thus:

They said: 'Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost' (***7:23***)

A group of commentators have said that the purpose of the 'words' might have been this invocation: *"O' Lord! There is no deity but You! Glory be to You, and Yours is the Praise! O' my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me! For Thou art the Best of those who forgive".* Or *"...And have mercy upon me: for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!"* Or *"...And turn unto me (in Mercy); for Thou art verily the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful!"*

This idea has been cited in a tradition narrated from Imam al-Baqir (‘a), the fifth Imam.9

Some phrases similar to the above ones have occurred in the Qur’an. For example, Jonah (Yunus) (‘a), asking Allah to forgive him, says:

…Glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong! (***21:87***)

And, about Moses (‘a), the Qur’an says:

He prayed: ‘O’ my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me! ‘So (***Allah***) ***forgave him…’*** (***28:16***)

Many Islamic traditions narrated from Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), such as *Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur,* denote that the objective meaning of the ‘words’ taught to Adam (‘a) by Allah was the holy names of the Holy Five; viz: the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), his cousin and son-in-law Hazrat ‘Ali, his daughter Fatimah, and his sons (i.e. grandsons) Hasan and Husayn (‘a). Adam (‘a) relied on these ‘words’ and asked Him to forgive him. Then, Allah accepted it and forgave him.

These three commentaries do not contradict one another since the entirety of the *‘words’* might have been taught to Adam (‘a) in order that, through their (the ‘words’) reality, depth, and innate nature, he could obtain a pure perfect spiritual change in his heart and soul totally so that Allah would shower him with His Grace and Guidance.

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1. For the word /Sama’/ in the sense of ‘atmosphere’, look at the on verse 22, Surah Baqarah, this Vol., pp. 113-114.

2. An imaginary, approximately similar meaning to this idea is seen in Milton’s, Paradise Lost, III, 56, 481. The same imagery will be found in Dante.
3. Tafsir al-Mizan, Vol. 1, p. 121.
4. Majma’ al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 76.
5. Tafsir Al-Mizan, Vol. 1, p. 126.
6. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 58; and Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. II, p. 139.
7. al-Mizan, Vol. 1, p. 181 (English version).
8. al-Mizan, Vol. 1, pp. 185-186 (English version).
9. Majma’ al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 89.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 4 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 40 – 48

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 40

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُواْ بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ

O' Children of Israel, remember My blessing wherewith I blessed you, and your covenant with Me as I fulfil My covenant with you, and have awe of none but Me (***2:40***)

Commentary

The Remembrance of the Favours of Allah

In the previous verses we learnt about the commission of Adam's vicegerency on the earth, the respectful treatment of the angels towards him, Iblis's reaction of pride, and the negligence of his covenant with Allah, and, consequently, his removal from the Garden and, thereafter, his penitence. Through these events, this fundamental principle was made clear that: in this world, there are two opposite forces, i.e. right and wrong, or just and unjust, which are always at odds with each other. He who, following the temptations of Satan, chooses the wrong path gets farther and farther away from felicity and salvation and involves himself in toil and pain, the fruit of which is remorse and regret.

But those who, heedless of the Satanic temptations and those of vicious fellows, choose the path of obedience of Allah will live a happy life, free from spiritual pain and grief.

There is a close similarity between the story of Adam (‘a) and that of the Israelites when they were rescued from the clutches of Pharaoh before their vicegerency on the earth, and, after that, their negligence of their solemn promise to Allah which caused them to be involved in pain and misery. Their fate not only resembles that of Adam's, but it can also be considered as a subdivision of that general principle. Hence, in the above verse and several verses after that, Allah refers to some different aspects of the lives of the Children of Israel and their lamentable end to complete with them the educative lesson which He started with the story of Adam's fate.

He addresses the Israelites and says:

O' Children of Israel, remember My blessing wherewith I blessed you, and your covenant with Me as I fulfil My covenant with you, and have awe of none but Me (***2:40***)

Those three instructions (the remembrance of the great blessings of Allah, being loyal to His covenant, to be in awe of only Him) are, indeed, the basis of all Divine programs.

The remembrance of the blessings of the Lord leads Man to the knowledge of Allah *and* provokes a sense of gratitude in him. Then, believing that those bounties are not given unconditionally and He has taken a covenant for them makes man aware of his duties and responsibilities. After this, not having awe of anybody or any power in the way of performing the Divine duties, causes Man to remove all the barriers and obstructions from his way and fulfil faithfully his responsibilities and promises, for, having awe of this and that, is one of the greatest obstacles on this way, especially in the case of the Israelites who were under the control of Pharaonic governments and, consequently, fear had become a part of their lives.

Explanations

Jews in Medina

It is interesting that, according to what historians of the Qur'an have cited, Surah Al-Baqarah is the first Surah that was revealed in Medina. This Surah talks mostly about Jews, because they were the most dominate group of the 'People of the Book' there. Before the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S), as their own religious books indicated, they were waiting for such an advent and used to give its glad tidings to others. They were also in a very good economic condition at that time, and, on the whole, they had a deep influence on the social affairs of Medina.

But, with the advent of Islam, many of them not only did not accept the invitation of Islam, but stood, hiddenly and openly, against it, because Islam hindered them from their unlawful interests and did not let them continue their evil social projects. Now, after the passing of more than fourteen centuries, this same hostility is still alive and active against Islam.

It was at that time when the above verse and the verses after that were sent down which blamed them intensively and, by mentioning the sensitive aspects of their historical background, moved them so violently that those Jews, who had the least sense of justice and truth-seeking, awoke and accepted Islam. Besides that, this admonishment was a comprehensive lesson for all the Muslim believers, too.

In the discussions of the verses that will come later, we shall talk about some of the outstanding circumstances of these people such as their rescue from the grips of Pharaoh, the cleaving asunder of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh and his horsemen, the appointing place of Moses ('a) on Mount Sinai (Tur), the calf (of gold) worshipped by the Israelites when Moses ('a) was not among them which caused them to receive the instruction of the bloody repentance and, thereafter, the special bounties of Allah were sent down for them, and some other events similar to these, each of which contains a lesson or lessons to be learnt by all.

The Jews' Twelve Covenants with Allah

As it is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an, the covenant mentioned in the above verse is the very covenant of worshipping Allah; to treat parents, kindred, orphans, and the needy with kindness; to

have fair behaviour with people, to attend and be steadfast in ritual prayers; to pay alms; to avoid doing grievous wrongs, and to avoid shedding blood.

The witness of this statement is Surah Al-Baqarah:

***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel** (**instructing**): **'You shall not worship any but Allah; and** (**you shall do**) **good to** (**your**) **parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans, and the needy, and speak kind words to people, keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates** (**zakat**)**'. Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you backslide** (**even now**). (**2:83**).*

***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with you: 'You shall not shed your blood, nor expel one another from your dwellings', then you confirmed it while you bore witness.** (**2:84**)*

These two verses, in fact, refer to the ten different covenants that Allah had taken from the Jews. When we consider, and add, the two other covenants of Surah Al-Ma'idah**,** which advises them to believe in the Divine prophets and help them respectfully, the fact is made clear that they had given numerous covenants to Allah for those great Divine blessings; and they had been promised by Allah to be settled in the Gardens of Heaven under whose trees and castles streams flow, if they would have kept their promises, thus:

***Allah did aforetime take a Covenant from the Children of Israel... And Allah said: 'I am with you: if ye** (**but**) **establish regular Prayers, practice regular Charity, believe in My apostles, honour and assist them... and admit you to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath...** (**5:12**)*

But, unfortunately, in spite of the long expectations of the Jews based upon the prophecies in their sacred scriptures, they, finally, observed none of those promises and they continued their most vehement and the most torturous opposition and persecution against Islam and Muslims not only at the advent of Islam but they have also been continuing it until the present time. The fruit of their evil actions was that they became vagrant, and this condition will always be seen in their lives till the time when they will be destroyed. If we see that, with the support of this or that, they flourish in their authoritative existence for a short length of time, it cannot be counted a real reason for their final victory. We know it well that one day the true followers of Islam, free from any tribal or racial adherences and only under the light of the Holy Qur'an, will rise and put an end to all these vanities.

Allah will Fulfil His Covenant, too!

The bounties of Allah have never been given unconditionally, and every blessing is accompanied by a responsibility or responsibilities.

A tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says that the objective meaning of the phrase: 'I shall fulfil your covenant', mentioned in this verse, is that Allah will fulfil His covenant in admitting them into Heaven. [1]

It is not surprising that, in this tradition, the belief in the mastership of Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a) is mentioned as a part of this covenant, because one of the items of the covenant of the Children of Israel was the acceptance of the prophecy of the Divine Apostles and the assisting of them. And it is evident that the acceptance of their vicegerents is also a part of the acceptance of that leadership and mastership, which should be established at any time appropriate with that age. At the time of Moses (‘a), it was he who held that position; and at the time of Hazrat Muhammad (S), he did, and thereafter Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a) continued it.

By the way, the phrase:

…and have awe of none but Me **(*2:40*)**

referring to an awe of His punishment because of their disobedience of His command, is an emphasis on this subject that, in fulfilling their covenant with Allah, they should fear of no one and no circumstance.

Why are Jews Called the Children of Israel?

‘Israel’ was one of the titles of Jacob, Yusuf’s (Joseph) father. Both the well-known commentators ‘Tabarsi’ in his book: *‘Majma’ al-Bayan*’ (Vol. 1, p. 92), and ‘Shaykh-al- Ta’ifah’ the Late Tusi in his book entitled: *‘at-Tibyan Fi Tafsir al-Qur’an’* (Vol. 1, p. 180) have expressed: *Israel is the same as Jacob, the son of Isaac* (*Ishaq*) *the son of Abraham* (*‘a*)*…*

These two great commentators believe that the word / isra’il / is a combination of the term ‘Isr’, /‘abd/, with the meaning of ‘servant’ and ‘il’ with the meaning of ‘Allah’. Then, the word means ‘the servant of Allah’; and it is a ‘Hebraic’ word.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 41-43

وَآمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلاَ تَكُونُواْ أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِآيَاتِي ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ

And believe in what I have revealed **(*the Qur’an*)*, confirming that*** **(*Scripture*)** ***which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price; and be in awe of none but Me.*** **(*2:41*)**

وَلاَ تَلْبِسُواْ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُواْ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And confound not the Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth while you know **(*it*)*.*** **(*2:42*)**

وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُواْ مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

***And keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates* (*zakat*)*, and bow down in prayer with those who bow down* (*in congregation worship*)*.* (*2:43*)

Commentary

The Lord commands the Jews that they should believe in His revelation, the Qur'an, and accept it because the acceptance of the Qur'an is just the same as the acceptance of the Torah:

And believe in what I have revealed* (*the Qur'an*) *confirming that* (*Scripture*) *which is with you... (*2:41*)

This statement indicates that the Torah, in which they believe, itself has pointed out the glad tidings of the advent of the promised Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (S), and the revelation of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, the requisite belief in the content of the Torah is belief in the Qur'an.

...and be not the first to reject Faith therein... (*2:41*)

The verse addresses the Jews and says that those people, who are of the "People of the Book" and among whom there are scholars and learned men who believe in God and have accepted the Divine prophets, should not be the first group to reject the Qur'an and deny its rightfulness. When their scholars do not accept the truth, many others also follow them and reject it.

...and sell not My Signs for a miserable price... (*2:41*)

Some authentic narrations denote that many of the scholars and Rabbis of the Jews used to sell the verses and some features of Hadrat Muhammad, the promised Prophet (S), mentioned in the Scripture of old, the Torah, to some of the rich Jews at that time and perverted the verses of the Torah in exchange for taking money from them. Here, Allah scorns them and forbids them from doing this abominable action and directs them not to corrupt the Scripture for that little sum of money. The money they used to take was, of course, a large sum, but in comparison with what they committed, it was very little. Allah's signs are worth more than all their paltry considerations and changing and perverting those Divine Signs is a very great sin so that gold and silver, howsoever much they may be, or even high social positions, seems naught in comparison with it. So, He says:

...and be in awe of none but Me. (*2:41*)

And confound not the Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth while you know* (*it*)*. (*2:42*)

This verse provides another emphasis on the above meaning. The Jewish scholars are told, here, not to mix up the truth with falsehood by perverting the verses of the Torah and hiding its revelations about the Prophet of Islam (S), when they are supposed to make them manifest, because they recognize them and, in connection to this, know the difference between right and wrong very well.

***And keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates* (*zakat*)*, and bow down in prayer with those who bow down* (*in congregation worship*)*.* (*2:43*)

In Islam, next to the belief in Allah, His Messenger, and the Resurrection, prayer and alms (zakat) are the two essential pillars of Faith without which the establishment and endurance of Faith is impossible.

Prayer and poor-rates, as well as observing their proper times, are strictly and repeatedly emphasized in the concerning verses of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic traditions and narrations. The excellence and importance of prayers are briefly pointed out in commenting on verse 3, the current Surah.

Explanation

Islam, as a religion, has revealed information with the perfection necessary to train mankind and to discipline the human race and to enable them to raise themselves from the depths of material degradation to the unlimited elevation of spiritual glory in order to qualify each – individual as an adherent, as much as he or she personally desires, to rise towards the divinity in store for every sincere seeker of it. The curbing of the physical desires of a human being is sure to have the natural consequence of sublimating it by the resulting moral effect on the mind which can gradually put it well on the way to receiving the enlightenment of the higher meanings of life.

A certain degree of piety and devotion is essential for a human being to be initiated into the realm of spiritual bliss. All the previous religions, particularly the creed of the Jews and the Christians, were limited to some extreme systems of optional ascetic hermitage of extremes which did not agree with the natural demands of the social life of the people. The imposition of such extremes, with the freedom to do it or not, could help only a few to follow the order, discarding completely their worthy life but the bulk of the people had sunk deep into hypocritical observances and practices.

Islam, as a practical and fully regulated religion, bases its foundation first on humbling the ego of man by making him conscious about his relation to his Creator and thus making him yield to the Lord, his God, in complete submission to Him by worshipping in a way suiting his humble position. By this, Islam brings man in the presence of his Lord. The first cardinal doctrine or ordinance of Islam is 'salat' or, 'prayers' which develops in a human being the appropriate feeling in relation to God and puts the individual in direct contact with the great qualities of the Absolute Divinity.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 44

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ

***Do you enjoin righteousness upon people while you forget your own selves* (*to practice it*)*? And you read the Scripture? Have you then no sense?* (*2:44*)

Commentary

This verse is apparently addressing and scorning the scholars of the Jews who, before the Divine invitation of Hadrat Muhammad (S), recommended people to embrace Islam. They enjoined them to pay charity and favour each other, but they did not do these good deeds themselves. They did not accept Islam in order to continue their mastership, nor pay charity lest they might become poor.

But, the verse, in fact, addresses and admonishes all those who habitually recommend others to piety and neglect their own souls.

Do you enjoin righteousness upon people while you forget your own selves (to practice it)?... **(*2:44*)**

It is not logical that a person enjoins his fellow men to help others and work righteousness but he himself does not observe it. That is why, at the end of the verse, it says:

...And you read the Scripture? Have you then no sense? **(*2:44*)**

It inquires how you do not understand that you should enjoin righteousness on yourselves first and do accordingly to be as an example, and then expect others to obey you and receive your recommendation, with their whole hearts. Experience has proved that words which are uttered only by the tongue, as simple statements, physically strike the ears and perish. But reasonable speech that arises from the soul and reality settles in souls firmly and affects hearts deeply.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 45-46

وَاسْتَعِينُواْ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلاَةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek you help (from Allah) through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing, save upon the humble, **(*2:45*)**

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلاَقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Those who bear in mind the certainty that they will meet their Lord and that verily unto Him shall they return. **(*2:46*)**

Commentary

To enable Man to overcome his latent low desires and to clean his mind from the love of position and rank, the *Qur'an* says:

***And seek you help** (**from Allah**) **through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing, save upon the humble** (**2:45**)*

How to Overcome Difficulties

To overcome difficulties and solve problems demands two fundamental principles. The first principle is a strong inner will, and the second one is a firm outward refuge. These two principles are referred to in the above verse as 'patience' and 'prayer'. Patience, here, has been rendered into 'fasting' and 'perseverance' during difficulties while prayer is a connection with Allah and a means of communication with this Helpful Refuge.

About the term /sabr/ 'patience', one of the books [2] says that it is a natural phenomenon well-known to every enlightened one that bodily mortification is to some extent necessary in disciplining the human ego accommodated in the physical framework, to lighten it by liberating it from the clutches of the desires and passions of the material world otherwise it would sink deeply into its own devious personal interest. This is essential to elevate it unto the heights of the spiritual realms. A religion merely consisting of some mere formal rituals and the offering of chanting or the recitation of some verbal prayers or charms without the demand on the individual for the practical control of the animal-self in him can hardly be worth anything. The truth endowed or the spiritual strength one gets through overcoming his selfish passions, is by itself a very vast subject to be dealt with in the brief notes meant to explain the particular aspects of the wordings of the Divine verses here. However, an Islamic tradition says that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was once asked about the meaning of the word /sabr/ 'patience', mentioned in this verse, when he said: *"Patience means fasting."*[3]

Again, commenting on this verse, the leading commentators have cited that whenever any difficulty confronted the Prophet of Islam (S), he used to resort to' fasting' and 'prayers' to be helped with.[4] Also, Hazrat 'Ali ('a) did the same.[5]

It is also narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) who has said: *"It does not matter that when one of you is involved in a grief out of the grieves of the world, you would make ablution and enter a mosque. Then, you would recite a prayer and offer a petition therein to* Allah*, because I know He has commanded: 'And seek you help* (*from* Allah) *through patience and prayer'."*[6]

Yes, verily prayer connects Man to an everlasting Power, to Allah, for Whom all the hard problems and complicated difficulties are easy. This very feeling causes man to be calm, powerful, and steadfast against misadventures.

And with prayer, what else can ever be imaginably more effective or successful than any individual in his helplessness approaching the All-Merciful, Almighty through prayers for help?

In the verse following the above one, the Holy Qur'an introduces the humble ones, thus:

Those who bear in mind the certainty that they will meet their Lord and that verily unto Him shall they return. (***2:46***)

So, it is narrated from Amir-ul Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) who has said that one of the characteristics of the humble ones who are the same as the believers is knowledge and certainty about their meeting with Allah which will take place in the Hereafter.[7]

What is 'Meeting with Allah'?

The idea of 'meeting with Allah 'has been mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an where it totally means 'Presence in the Hereafter'. It is obvious that the purpose of 'meeting with the Lord' is not a physical meeting like the meeting of people with each other face to face. We also know that Allah is not a bodily substance to have colour or place, or to be seen with the eyes. Then, as some commentators have said, the purpose of the phrase may be the observation of the effects of His Power in the scene of the Hereafter, such as: His bounties, rewards, and punishments.

Or, it means an esoteric intuition in the heart or soul, because, sometimes, Man reaches a point that he sees the Lord in front of him by his heart's eye, and in that case no doubt will continue for him.

This state may come to being for some people in this world as a result of piety, worship, and purification of the carnal soul. The following explanation, cited in Nahjul Balagha, attests to the idea:

One of the companions of Amir-ul Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), Di'lib al-Yamani, who was a learned man, once asked him ('a) whether 'Ali ('a) had seen Allah, his Lord, when he ('a) replied: *"Do I worship the One Whom I have not seen?"* Then the man asked him to explain it more and 'Ali ('a) added: *"Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts* (*souls*) *perceive Him through the* (*light of*) *realities of Faith..."*[8]

However, in the Hereafter, all human beings will attain this esoteric intuition, since, therein, the effects of the Glory and Power of Allah will be so manifested that none can deny them, and all will have a decisive Faith in everything.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 47-48

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

O' Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you, and that I made you excel the nations (***of that time***). (***2:47***)

وَاتَّقُواْ يَوْماً لاَّ تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلاَ يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from anyone, nor shall any ransom be taken from anyone, nor shall they be helped (***from outside***). (***2:48***)

Commentary

The Vain Imaginations of the Jews

In these verses, again, the Lord addresses the Children of Israel and reminds them of His bounties bestowed on them, thus:

O' Children of Israel, call to mind My favours which I bestowed on you... (***2:47***)

These bounties were numerous consisting of Faith, Divine Guidance and their rescue from the grips of pharaohs which led them to regaining their splendour and independence.

Then, among these bounties He has pointed out the bounty of their being made to excel the nations of their time which in itself is a combination of different bounties. He continues and says:

...and that I made you excel the nations (***of that time***). (***2:47***)

Some may think that the objective meaning of the phrase,

I made you excel the nations, (***2:47***)

is that He has made them excel the nations all over the world and forever.

But, regarding other verses, the Qur'an makes it clear that the application of the address 'you' is meant for those immediately present at that time and in their own locality, because in another occurrence the Qur'an, addressing Muslims, says:

You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind (***3:110***).

Another verse about the Israelites says:

And We made a people, considered weak (***and of no account***)***, inheritors of lands in both East and West...*** (***7:137***).

It is obvious that the Children of Israel did not inherit the world entirely at that time. So, it means that they inherited the east and the west of their own region, Therefore, their preference to other nations means preference to the other nations in their environment at that time.

The Qur'an rejects the vain considerations of the Jews, They thought that, on the Day of Judgment, their forefathers and ancestors, who were prophets of Allah would make intercession for them; or they imagined that on that Day those prophets could give ransom for their sins the same as some of their

people employ bribery in this world, The Qur'an says:

And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from anyone, nor shall any ransom be taken from anyone, nor shall they be helped (***from outside***). (***2:48***)

In brief, the 'Judge' on that Day is He Who accepts, from the servants, only pure good actions done with true belief, as the Qur'an says about it:

The Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail (***26:88***).

But only he (***will prosper***) ***that brings to Allah a sound heart*** (***26:89***).

The verse under discussion, in fact, is a hint to this reality that, in this world, saving a sinful person from punishment by applying all possible means is an ordinary custom. Sometimes someone undertakes the payment of another person's compensation and pays it. If this way fails, intercession may be resorted to and some respectable personalities who have power and influence may be brought forward to intercede for him. If intercession does not avail either, the person tries to save himself by paying for the fine. And, if this, too, provides no results, he asks his friends and fellow men to help him somehow, so that he can escape from the grips of punishment.

There are different ways of fleeing from punishment in this world, but the Qur'an says that the chastisements in the Hereafter are completely different from those in this world and none of these behaviours are acceptable there. The only way of rescue is to refuge under the shade of Faith and righteousness, and to ask help from Allah, the Merciful.

Supplication

O'Lord, the Creator, the Cherisher! We humbly ask You to guide us so that, at the end, You will be pleased with us and we can be prosperous.

Intercession in the Qur'an and Traditions

The term /Shafa'at/ 'intercession', with all its derivations, has occurred about thirty times in the Qur'an. This status shows the depth of the importance of the matter.

Undoubtedly, the punishments of the Lord, whether in this world or in the next, are not for revenging at all, but they are, in fact, to warrant the obedience of the Divine ordinances and, consequently, the development and progress of men. Therefore, everything that weakens this security should be avoided in order that people would be less likely to commit sin and vice.

On the other hand, the way of repentance and return to righteousness and improvement should not be completely closed to the sinners. They must have the opportunity and possibility of improving

themselves which results in piety and returning to the path of Allah.

Thus, intercession means that, on the Day of Judgement, prophets, saints, and some special righteous ones will intercede with Allah's permission for those who have not cut their tie of Faith with Allah and preserved their spiritual relationship with Him and His Messengers.

In other words, intercession, in its proper meaning, exists for the preserving of this equilibrium. It is a means for the sinners and the wrong-doers to return from their present way to the path of obedience and servitude.

We may emphasize that the doctrine of intercession is quite natural, reasonable and logical. It is a natural, just, and merciful classification of souls according to the natural affinity and the bonds of love and sincere attachment which existed between the individual and the faithful servants of Allah, viz. the Holy Prophet (S) and the holy Ahl al-Bayt ('a) whose purity of spirit, flawlessness of conduct and character, selfless services and matchless sacrifices for the cause of truth, are universal factors and whose goodliness is unreservedly acknowledged by the Muslims and even by the non-Muslims as well.

However, as it was mentioned before, there are numerous verses in the Qur'an concerning 'intercession'. To understand these verses completely and correctly, all of them should be studied carefully and considered as a whole to follow the unity of purpose they are meant for.

It is absolutely wrong that for proving our claim we take only one verse from amongst the numerous verses on intercession and neglect the others. The errors that have come into being upon the subject of intercession, as well as upon some other rational subjects, are the effect of such wrong and imperfect investigations. This method, in which we take a single verse and refuse or neglect other verses that can be elucidative and frames of reference for that particular verse, is far from the right manner of researching.

Then, firstly, besides all the other arguments of the various expositions on the validity of intercession based upon the other verses of the Qur'an, as was mentioned formerly, and with further assurance by the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S), it is a natural and logical conclusion, beyond all doubt, that on the Day of Judgement intercession cannot be but an undeniable fact. That is, Allah regard for His holy and faithful servants is accepted as a natural and logical necessary factor.

Secondly, it is certain that the Holy Qur'an in many places, some of which are mentioned below, asserts the effectiveness of intercession under some conditions, on the Day of Judgement, when those authorized by the Lord shall have the right to do it. The Qur'an says:

On that Day shall no intercession avail except for those for whom permission has been granted by (Allah) Most Gracious and whose word is acceptable to Him (20:109).

No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those for whom He has granted

permission... **(*34:23*).**

***And those whom they invoke besides Allah have no power of intercession; only he who bears witness to the Truth, and they know* (*him*) (*43:86*).**

For further elucidation on the doctrine of intercession some of the verses which can also be referred to are: 26:100, 2:123; 2:255, 74:48, 21:28, and 19:87.

In the authentic literature of Muslims, both the Sunnite and Shi'ah schools, through some Islamic narrations, there are many implications to the existence of 'intercession' in the Hereafter which are presented as explanatory statements for the aforementioned verses on intercession.

Some of these books are: *Bihar-al-Anwar, Majma' al-Bayan, Tafsir al-Mizan, at-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, al-Khisal* by Shaykh al-Saduq, *Usul al-Kafi*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Musnad Ahmad*, *Muwatta-i-Malik*, *Sunan-Tirmizi, Sunan-Darmi, Sahih Muslim, Sahih Bukhari*,

Out of the many traditions and narrations cited in the above-mentioned books, a few of them have been chosen here:

1. The Holy Prophet (S) has said: *"I will be the first one who intercedes and the first one whose intercession will be accepted (by Allah)."*[9]

2. Hadrat 'Ali ('a) said: *"...We will intercede and those who love (and follow) us will do so, too..."*[10]

3. The Holy Prophet (S) also said: *"...I have been bestowed on (five privileges: the first is), 'intercession' which I have kept for my followers (Ummah). Intercession is (permitted) for the one who associates no partner with Allah..."*[11]

4. Again, the Messenger of Allah (S) has said: *"...The most prosperous people by my intercession on the Day of Judgement will be those who have sincerely said from their deep hearts (souls): there is no god except Allah (i.e. sincerely believe in* Allah*)."*[12]

5. The Holy Prophet (S) has also said: *"My intercession is for all (true) Muslims."*[13]

6. Firdous-ud-Diylami, Abu Hurayrah, narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) who has said:

"The intercessors (in the Hereafter) are five: the Qur'an, relationships, trust, your Messenger, and the people of the house (Ahl al-Bayt) of your prophet."[14]

7. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: *"There is none of (the people of) ancient times and (those of) the later times but needs Muhammad's intercession (S) on the Day of Judgement."*[15]

8. In *Usul al-Kafi*, it is also cited that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has said in a tradition: *"He who wishes to enjoy of intercession by the intercessors with Allah, should try to gain His pleasure."*[16]

We hope that Allah, the Merciful, may bestow the success of obedience and servitude on His path upon all of us and may He save us from any err and sin in our deeds. May He deprive us not of the intercession of the Holy Prophet (S) and Ahl al-Bayt ('a) on the Day of Reckoning. Amin, O' Lord of the Worlds!

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1. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol., 1, p 73.
2. The Holy Qur'an, with English Translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary, p. 98.
3. Al-Burhan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 14 and Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 111.
4. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 99.
5. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 100.
6. Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 3, p. 480.
7. Atyab al-Bayan, Vol. 2, p. 21.
8. Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 179.
9. Sunan al-Tirmizi Vol. 5, p. 24 and Sunan al-Darmi; Vol. 1, p. 26 & 27.
10. al-Khisal by as-Saduq, p. 624.
11. Musnad al-Ahmad, Vol. 1, p. 301 and Sunan al-Nisai Vol. 1, p. 172.
12. Sahih-al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 36.
13. Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 2, p. 1444, Tradition 4317.
14. Bihar-al-Anwar, Vol. 8, p. 43.
15. Bihar-al-Anwar, Vol. 8, p. 38, Tradition 16.
16. Usul al-Kafi; Vol. 8, p. 11 and Bihar-al-Anwar, Vol. 8, p. 53.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 5 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 49 - 56

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 49

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُم بَلاء مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

***And** (**remember**) **when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh who had afflicted you with evil torment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women-folk, and in that was a great trial from your Lord.** (**2:49**)*

Commentary

In this verse, the Qur'an points to another great bounty out of the bounties He bestowed on the Children of Israel. This favour is the bounty of deliverance from the grips of those transgressors. This is the greatest bounty amongst the bounties of Allah on them and He reminds them, saying:

And** (**remember**) **when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh who had afflicted you with evil torment slaughtering your sons and sparing your women-folk... (***2:49***)

They let your women-folk live as maid-servants and serve hard for them.

...and in that was a great trial from your Lord. (***2:49***)

To illustrate the torments of Pharaoh upon the Israelites, the Qur'an has particularly applied the term /yasumuna/ in the future tense of the verb, which, in Arabic, indicates the duration and continuity of that evil torment. Thus, they saw for themselves that their innocent sons were slaughtered before their eyes, and their daughters were taken away from them to serve in the Egyptians' houses as maidservants. That conduct caused them to tolerate and experience torture permanently, too. They were considered as servants, workers, and slaves of the Coptic people in Egypt and of the men of Pharaoh.

It is a matter of importance that the Qur'an counts this event as a great and grievous trial for the Children of Israel and, of course, bearing all those bitter harsh afflictions had been a hard tremendous trial.

It is also probable that the term /bala'/ 'trial', here, has been used with the meaning of 'punishment'. The reason is that before that event, Israelites had been enjoying an abundance of bounties with great power and authority. But they became ungrateful and the Lord punished them.

Anyhow, the day when the Children of Israel were delivered from the tyrannical clutches of the Egyptian monarch, the Pharaoh, was a very important historical day in their lives on which the Holy Qur'an has emphasized repeatedly.

Slavery of Females, Past and Present

In the history of the Israelites, their bondage in Egypt was indeed a tremendous trial for them. Even the Egyptians' wish to spare the lives of the Israelites' females when the males were slaughtered, as the Qur'an declares, added to their bitterness. So, their rescue from that cruelty was really counted as a bounty.

It seems that the Qur'an intends to warn all human beings that they should try to obtain their rightful freedom however hard it may be and protect it.

Hadrat 'Ali ('a) has pointed out this matter in one of his sermons: *"...Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying in the way of freedom..."*[1]

But the modern world is different from that of the ancient in this manner. At that time, for example, Pharaoh, through his peculiar cruelty, slaughtered the men and the sons of the people who were his enemies and let their females remain alive to serve Egyptians. While, today, in this modern world, the spirit of manhood among males is often slaughtered under some other circumstances, and their females are mostly made slaves for the lustful pleasure of a group of filthy men. Sometimes, the Pharaohs of the Age have pity upon neither men nor women; neither sons nor daughters; neither adults nor infants. They have verified this statement in the massacres they have committed in some Islamic and non-Islamic countries by using chemical bombs and the likes of them. Their actions are often even worse than what the Pharaohs of Egypt used to do.

Now, why did Pharaoh decide to kill the Israeli boys and let their women-folk live? Some of the commentators believe that the reason for that murderous decision was the dream that Pharaoh dreamed. A more appropriate answer to this question will be discussed when commenting on Surah Al-Qasas, 28:4. Therein, you will come to know that the reason for that murder was not only Pharaoh's dream, but he and his clique also stood in awe of the increasing number of the Children of Israel and that they might become powerful and destroy the government of Pharaoh. This factor helped them make that hostile decision.

Some details about the miserable lot of the Israelites under the bondage of Pharaoh and how they were rescued, are also explained in Exodus – the opening chapter of the Bible i.e. Chapter 1.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 50

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ

***And** (**remember**) **when We divided the sea for you and delivered you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking on** (**2:50**)*

Commentary

The Rescue from Pharaoh!

In the previous verse the miraculous rescue of the Israelites from the tyrannical grips of the Egyptian monarch, the Pharaoh, was briefly pointed out. The present verse is, in fact, an explanatory statement of that rescue, which itself is a sign of the great bounties of Allah upon the Children of Israel. It says:

***And** (**remember**) **when We divided the sea for you and delivered you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking on** (**2:50**)*

The incident of the drowning of Pharaoh and his horsemen in the sea, and the rescue of the children of Israel from their cruel clutches is expressed in several Surahs of the Qur'an, including: Surah Al-'A'raaf,

7:136; Surah Al-'Anfal, 8:54; Surah Al-'Isra', 17:103; Surah Ash-Shu'ara', 26:63 and 26:66; Surah Az-Zukhruf, 43:55 and Surah Ad-Dukhan, 44:17 onwards.

More or less all the details of that happening are stated in the above Surahs, but by the verse under discussion the story is hinted at only from the point of the favour and grace of Allah upon the Children of Israel in order to attract them to the invitation of Islam, the new religion of salvation, and to invoke them to accept it.

As you will read the explanation of this subject in detail through the aforementioned Surahs, Moses ('a), after a long time of preaching and inviting Pharaoh and his people to the Divine Faith and showing them numerous miracles and receiving no positive response from them, was commissioned that he and the Children of Israel move from Egypt at midnight. But when he reached the seashore, he realized that Pharaoh and his horsemen were closely pursuing them. The Israelites were terribly afraid.

They had the frightful sea in front of them and at their heels the forceful army of the Pharaoh, whom they could not challenge, threatened them. At that time Moses ('a) was commanded to strike the water of the sea with his Rod and he obeyed. Then several dry paths appeared in the sea on which Moses ('a) and his people passed. When they crossed the sea from between the walls of water and arrived on the other side of the sea safely, Pharaoh and his army, who were following them, entered the same paths. They reached the midst of the sea when the walls of water came together and all of them drowned. Their corpses were floating over the sea water as the Children of Israel were watching them and witnessing how helpless their enemies were in front of their eyes.

That terrible anxiety and the horrible fear they had compared with this miraculous rescue both deserved to be contemplated, and demanded that they express thanksgiving to Allah.

In this manner, the Qur'an tells the Jews that Allah has granted them His Mercy so that they could rid themselves of that anxiety and awe; then why do they repudiate the Prophet of Islam, Allah's Messenger, and do not accept Islam?

By the way, this verse teaches the human race to rely on Allah and trust in that everlasting Power in their lives. They ought to try hard and not stop in their endeavours and seek His help, because He helps them even in their most grievous moments.

A detailed story of this miraculous event is given in the Bible, Exodus; Chapter 14.

1. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

2. Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

3. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

4. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the **LORD**. And they did so.

5. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this that we have let Israel go from serving us?

6. And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him.

7. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt and captains over every one of them.

8. And the **LORD** hardened the heart of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel and the children of Israel went out with a high hand.

9. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

10. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the **LORD.**

11. And they said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12. Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the **LORD**, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever.

14. The **LORD** shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15. And the **LORD** said unto Moses: Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.

16. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

17. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get honour upon Pharaoh, upon all his host, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen.

18. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the **LORD**, when I have gotten honour upon Pharaoh, upon

his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

20. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

21. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the **LORD** caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

23. And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24. And it came to pass that in the morning watch the **LORD** looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of the fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.

25. And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, let us flee from the face of Israel: for the **LORD** fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

26. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen.

27. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the **LORD** over-threw the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30. Thus the **LORD** saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

31. And Israel saw that great work which the **LORD** did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the **LORD**, and believed the **LORD,** and his servant Moses.

The above text is exactly narrated from the Bible, published in London by the British and Foreign Bible

Society, 146 Queen Victoria Street. Then, if some signs and punctuations are not the same as those used in the present style of English writing, it should not be taken as being wrong or misused, but it is because of the method of writing in the original English translated Bible that we observed carefully, without making any changes in the text. The case is also true for page 190 in this book.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 51–54

وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

***And** (**remember**) **when We appointed forty nights for Moses, and you then took the Calf** (**for worship**) **after him, and you were unjust** (**to yourselves**). (**2:51**)*

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

***Then We pardoned you after that in order that you might be thankful.** (**2:52**)*

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

***And** (**remember**) **when We gave Moses the Book as a Criterion** (**between right and wrong**) **so that you might be guided** (**aright**). (**2:53**)*

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُواْ إِلَى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُواْ أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

***And** (**remember**) **when Moses said to his people: 'O' my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by worshipping the Calf; so turn** (**in repentance**) **to your Creator and slay yourselves** (**the wrong doers**), **that will be better for you with your Creator'. Then, He turned towards you** (**mercifully**). **Truly, He is the Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful.** (**2:54**)*

Commentary

The Israelites' Greatest Deviation

In these four verses, the Qur'an refers to another episode in the adventurous history of the Children of Israel and reminds the Jews of some shaking events of theirs.

These verses speak of their greatest deviation throughout the history of their lives which was their aberration from the path of monotheism to the worshipping of the calf. The Qur'an warns them that they

had gone astray once in their history because of the temptations of the mischief makers. Now they should beware not to repeat that mistake. They should be attentive that the way of pure monotheism, viz. the way of Islam and the Qur'an, is open to them. They must not detach from it. First the verse says:

And (***remember***) ***when We appointed forty nights for Moses…*** (***2:51***)

When he (Moses) departed from you and his thirty night appointment delayed for forty nights,

…and you then took the Calf (***for worship***) ***after him, and you were unjust to yourselves.*** (***2:51***)

This event will be scrutinized when commenting on Surah Al–'A'raaf, 7:141 and Surah Ta Ha, 20:86. The story in brief is as follows:

After the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the tyrannical grips of Pharaoh and his men, who drowned in the sea, Moses ('a) was commanded to leave for Mount Sinai to stay there for thirty days and nights in order to receive the Law or the Torah on the Tablets from the Lord. Subsequently, the term was extended by ten more days and nights for the trial of the people. The delay in the return of Moses ('a) to his people at the end of thirty days, owing to the extension of the time by ten days and nights, was sufficient to create in the minds of the Israelites doubt about the authenticity of Moses ('a) as a true Prophet, on one hand, and for fallacious seductive Sameri to make a golden Calf possessing a special sound in order to deceive the Israelites, on the other hand. They, thereby, were deluded into calf–worship.

The majority of the Children of Israel joined him. Aaron ('a), the deputy and brother of Moses ('a) with a minority of people remained faithful to their monotheistic creed. They tried very much to restrain others from that great deviation, but they failed finally.

When Moses ('a) returned from the Mount and observed the circumstances, he became angry about it and scorned them severely. They understood that they had done wrong and decided to repent. Moses ('a) on Allah's command suggested to them an important repentance, whose explanation will be presented in future verses.

In the next verse it says:

Then We pardoned you after that in order that you might be thankful. (***2:52***)

Then, it continues mentioning the series of happenings that had occurred before, saying:

And (***remember***) ***when We gave Moses the Book as a Criterion*** (***between right and wrong***) ***so that you might be guided*** (***aright***). (***2:53***)

And (***remember***) ***when Moses said to his people: 'O' my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by worshipping the Calf…*** (***2:54***)

...so turn (***in repentance***) ***to your Creator...*** (***2:54***)

your repentance should be fulfilled in this definite form:

...and slay yourselves (***the wrong doers***) ***...*** (***2:54***)

in which the righteous had to kill the wrong doers. Of course, those who had not worshipped the calf were not condemned to death, but they were commissioned to slay those calf-worshippers among themselves, be they their own kith and kin, i.e. their own fellow men whom they loved the most because they had associated a partner, the Calf, to the Lord, the One True God.[2]

'...that will be better for you with your Creator.' Then, He turned toward you (***mercifully***). ***Truly, He is the Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful.*** (***2:54***)

The phrase /innakum alamtum anfusakum/ 'you have indeed wronged yourselves', here, is also noteworthy because: in Islam, sin which a man or a woman commits, is done against the individual's own self. For, the first and the immediate effect of a sin committed is that the individual becomes degenerated and thus gets far away from Divine Mercy.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 55-56

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ

And (***remember***) ***when you said: 'O' Moses! We will never believe in you until we see Allah manifestly', so the thunderbolt struck you while you looked on.*** (***2:55***)

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Then We raised you up after your death in order that haply you might be thankful. (***2:56***)

Commentary

An Unjust Demand!

These two verses remind the Children of Israel about another bounty amongst the great bounties that Allah bestowed upon them. This illustrates how stubborn and obstinate those people were, and how the divine grievous torment encompassed them as a result of their unjust demand. But, thereafter, the Mercy of Allah blessed them again. It says:

And (***remember***) ***when you said: 'O' Moses! We will never believe in you until we see Allah manifestly'.*** (***2:55***)

This kind of demand might originate from their 'ignorance', because the minds of ignorant ones usually cannot understand beyond the impressions of their senses. Their minds are not able to conceive anything invisible. So, they demanded to see the Lord openly with their own eyes.

Or, it originated haply from their stubbornness and their habit of seeking pretext which was one of the characteristics of those people.

At any rate, they frankly told Moses ('a) that they would never believe in him until they saw the Lord manifestly and with their very eyes.

Here, they insisted on seeing Him. This placed Moses ('a) in a helpless predicament. So, they saw, instead, one of the creatures of Allah that they did not have the ability to look upon. This incident might have made them understand that the eyes of the head were not able to see even many of the creations of Allah, much less their ability to see His Pure Self, the Almighty. Then, a thunderbolt came down and struck the mountain. It issued an amazing light with a horrible sound and an awful earthquake so that everybody there, because of their intensive fear, fell down dead. So, the Qur'an, following the above sentence says:

...so the thunderbolt struck you while you looked on. (***2:55***)

Moses ('a) was very worried about that event. Seventy persons from amongst the great leaders of the Israelites had died in that occurrence. It was a very crucial event for the Children of Israel to endure, and they would make life hard for Moses ('a). Then he ('a) asked Allah to raise them up and let them live again. His supplication was accepted, as the Qur'an says:

Then We raised you up after your death in order that haply you might be thankful. (***2:56***)

This short explanation of the above two verses is also expounded more comprehensively in Surah Al-'A'raaf, 7:155 and Surah Nisa, 4:153. Concerning seeing God, we have in Exod. 33/20: "And He said: 'Thou canst see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live'." See the Bible, Exodus 19/16 and 19/17, too, which is as follows:

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.[3]

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.[4]

This story shows that while inviting the ignorant and stubborn people to the right path, the great prophets of Allah were involved in many complicated problems. Sometimes, the people asked for improvisatorial miracles from the prophets; and sometimes they went further and demanded of them to see the Lord openly with their physical eyes. They said decisively that they would never believe in them unless their

demand was actually performed. They insisted on their vain thoughts and put forth some new excuses even when they were faced with respective violent responses from the Lord. But, the Grace and Mercy of Allah assisted the prophets on their path, else it was impossible for them to resist and stand firm when receiving all those excuses.

This tendency of demanding extraordinary and silly manifestations as miracles had also been the habit of the opponents of the Holy Prophet (S)5.

By the way, this verse is one of the verses that attest to the existence of the possibility of 'restoration of life', in this world, because its occurrence in one respect is evidence of its possibility in other respects, too.

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1. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 51. Online at: https://al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-51-they-ask-yo... [11]
2. Atyab al-Bayan, Vol. 2, p. 34.
3. Exodus 19/16.
4. Exodus 19/17.
5. The Holy Qur'an 4:153, and 17:90-96.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 6 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 57 - 61

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 57

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

And We outspread the clouds to shade you, and We sent down manna and quail upon you, (saying): 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you'. (But they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they were putting themselves to destruction. (***2:57***)

Commentary

Abundant Bounties!

As it is understood from Surah Al-Ma'idah, when the Children of Israel were saved from the hostility of the Pharaoh and his army, Allah commanded them to move toward the Holy Land of Jerusalem and enter in it. But the Israelites did not obey the command saying:

…in this land are a people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it: if (once) they leave then shall we enter (5:22).

Those rebellious people's disobedience did not stop there. They even told Moses ('a):

'…Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch)' (5:24).

Moses became very displeased with their words and told the story of his grievance to the Lord. Finally, it was appointed that the Children of Israel wander through the desert (of Sinai) in distraction for forty years.

A group of those people regretted their wrong action and returned to the Lord repenting of that sin. Then, He bestowed His bounties on them again, a part of which is referred to in the verse under discussion, where it says:

And We outspread the clouds to shade you… (2:57)

It is obvious how happy a wandering passenger, who has been walking under the hot sun in the desert that he has to pass through without any shelter from morning till evening, is when he receives the welcome shade of clouds!

True, it is probable that shady clouds sometimes appear in the sky of the deserts, but the verse clearly declares that the event was not an ordinary thing that occurred for the Children of Israel. It was the favour of Allah that often showered upon them and they enjoyed it.

At the same time, during that long span of time, the passengers in that hot dry desert needed food and sustenance. That problem was also solved for them by the Merciful Creator, as the verse continues saying:

And we sent down manna and quail upon you, (saying): 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.'… (2:57)

In order that you may enjoy of the pure delicious nutritious sustenance and not disobey Him. Yet, they were not thankful to Him.

…(But they rebelled) to Us they did no harm, but they were putting themselves to destruction. (2:57)

The terms ‘manna’ and ‘salwa’ are differently interpreted by different philologists and commentators. However, the fact is: ‘manna’, and ‘salwa’ refer to the heavenly provisions the Israelites were provided with, without any strain or burden on their part.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 58-59

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُواْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُواْ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَداً وَادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّداً وَقُولُواْ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And (***remember***) ***when We said, ‘Enter this city*** (***Jerusalem***) ***and eat of the plentiful therein, wherever you desire, and enter the gate with humility and ask forgiveness, We shall forgive you your sins, and give more*** (***the portion of***) ***those who do good’.*** (***2:58***)

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ رِجْزاً مِّنَ السَّمَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ

But those who were unjust substituted a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them, so We sent down upon those who were unjust a torment from heaven for what they used to pervert. (***2:59***)

Commentary

The Israelites’ Intensive Obstinacy

Here we are dealing with another aspect of the life of the Children of Israel concerning their entrance in the Holy Land. It says:

And (***remember***) ***when We said:*** ‘***Enter this city*** (***Jerusalem***)***…’*** (***2:58***)

The term /qaryah/ in our ordinary speaking usually means: ‘a village or a town’, but in the Qur’an it is applied for any place where people are gathered to live in, whether it is a city, town, or village. The meaning, here, is Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

Then it adds:

‘…and eat of the plentiful therein, wherever you desire, and enter the gate with humility and ask forgiveness, We shall forgive you your sins, and give more (***the portion of***) ***those who do good.’*** (***2:58***)

It should be noted that the term /hittah/ philologically means: ‘a putting down’, and, here, it means: ‘a petition for the putting down of a heavy burden of sin from them and asking Allah to forgive their faults.’

The Lord commanded the Israelites to say that phrase with their whole hearts and spirits for the purpose of asking, thereby, for the putting down of their heavy burdens from them, because they needed to be put down from them before entering the Holy Land. And they were promised that they would be forgiven their sins if they did perform the command accordingly. Maybe, it is for the same reason that one of the doors of Heaven is entitled 'Bab al-Hittah' (the door of forgiveness). Abu Hayyan Andulusi says that the objective meaning of / bab /, here, is one of the doors of Jerusalem which is known as 'Bab al-Hittah'.[1]

The verse finally proclaims that as for the doers of good, besides forgiving their sins, there will be endowed some additional bounties and rewards upon them, too. It says:

...and give more (***the portion of***) ***those who do good.*** (***2:58***)

However, Allah ordered them to express this phrase sincerely as a sign of their repentance and request for forgiveness in order to show their humility unto Him. The Lord promised them that He would forgive them their sins if they followed through with the command. In that case, He would also increase His favour and reward for the good doers among them along with the forgiveness of their faults.

But, as we know and are acquainted with the stubbornness and obstinacy of the Children of Israel, some of them even refused to utter the phrase and mockingly they said another incongruous word (Hinta) 'wheat' instead of it. Then, the Qur'an says:

But those who were unjust substituted a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them; so We sent down upon those who were unjust a torment from heaven for what they used to pervert. (***2:59***)

Divine Punishment in some form or other awaits those who unwarrantedly and unjustly change the word of Allah and His covenant, to something other than the original presented to them.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 60

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَى مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْناً قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ
كُلُواْ وَاشْرَبُواْ مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

And (***remember***) ***when Moses sought water for his people, so We said: 'Strike the rock with your staff.' Then there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Each*** (***group of***) ***people knew their*** (***respective***) ***drinking-place. 'Eat and drink of Allah's provision, and commit you not evil in the earth, doing corruption'*** (***2:60***)

Commentary

The Miracle of Water Gushing Forth in The Desert!

Again, in this verse, Allah has pointed out one of the important favours bestowed upon the Children of Israel, saying:

***And remember*) *when Moses sought water for his people...* (*2:60*)**

When Moses (‘a) prayed for water, Allah accepted his plea as the Qur’an says:

***...so We said: ‘Strike the rock with your staff.’ Then there gushed forth from it twelve springs...* (*2:60*)**

Each of those springs flowed for a definite tribe so that among all of the tribes of Israelites:

***...Each* (*group of*) *people knew their* (*respective*) *drinking place...* (*2:60*)**

There are a variety of ideas about what kind of stone that rock was and how Moses (‘a) was supposed to strike that rock, and in what form the flow of water appeared from it. What the Qur’an says is not more than that Moses (‘a) struck the rock with his staff and then twelve springs gushed forth therefrom.

This incident is referred to in Exodus 17/1–6, with the only difference being that the number of twelve springs that gushed forth from the rock is not mentioned. However, the Lord, on one hand, sent ‘Manna’ and ‘Salwa’ (quails) for them, and, on the other hand, provided them enough water, easily available, and told them:

***...eat and drink of Allah’s provision, and commit you not evil in the earth, doing corruption.* (*2:60*)**

In fact, the Lord advises them, as a showing of gratitude for these great bounties, that at least they should lay stubbornness and obstinacy aside and stop hurting prophets (‘a).

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 61

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَن نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىَ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الأَرْضُ مِن بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ اهْبِطُواْ مِصْراً فَإِنَّ لَكُم مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآؤُوْاْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَواْ وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ

And* (*remember*) *when you said: ‘O’ Moses! never can we* (*always*) *endure one sort of food, so beseech your Lord for us, to produce for us of what the earth groweth, its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions’. He* (*Moses*) *said: ‘Would you have in exchange what is worse for what is better? Enter a city, thus you shall get that which you demanded. Abasement and humiliation were stamped upon them, and they incurred wrath from Allah; that was because

they went on rejecting Allah's Signs and slaying the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and went on transgressing. (***2:61***)

Commentary

Demanding A Variety of Food

To continue the description mentioned in the former verses about the different bounties Allah bestowed on the Children of Israel, here in the verse under discussion, the unthankfulness and ingratitude of the Israelites for those great favours is illustrated.

The verse indicates how obstinate they were, so much so that perhaps no people can be found in the history of the human race similar to them from the point of being ungrateful for Divine favours.

At first it says:

And (***remember***) ***when you said: 'O' Moses! never can we*** (***always***) ***endure one sort of food, so beseech your Lord for us, to produce for us of what the earth groweth, its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions'…*** (***2:61***)

But in reply to them:

He (***Moses***) ***said: 'Would you have in exchange what is worse for what is better?'*** (***2:61***)

Now that it is so:

'…Enter a city, thus you shall get that which you demanded!'… (***2:61***)

Then, the Qur'an adds that:

…Abasement and humiliation were stamped upon them, and they incurred wrath from Allah. That was because they went on rejecting Allah's Signs and slaying the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and went on transgressing. (***2:61***)

Why Were the Israelites Stamped with Abasement and Humiliation?

As the above verse indicates, they incurred humiliation and wretchedness because of two things: the first was because they went on disobeying the orders of Allah and straying from the path of monotheism to that of infidelity.

The second factor was that they used to kill the righteous and apostles of Allah. This hard-heartedness and heedlessness of the Divine laws and even against most human laws that even today clearly continues among the Jews might be the cause of that humiliation and abasement.

Right now, as we are writing these lines, the territory of Lebanon is being invaded savagely by this hard-

hearted tribe where thousands of men and women, among whom are innocent, old persons, infant babies, hospital patients and the like, are unjustly and tyrannically being slain in a pitiable way. Their bodies are lying lifelessly on the ground in wait of burial. We are sure that this tribe will certainly have to pay the penalty for their cruelty in the future.

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1. At-Tafsir al-Kashif, Vol. 1, p. 109.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 7 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 62 - 64

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَالَّذِينَ هَادُواْ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحاً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Verily those who believed (***in the Prophet of Islam***)***, and those of Jews and Christians and Sabians, whoever believed*** (***truly***) ***in Allah and the Last Day, and worked righteously - for them is their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve.*** (***2:62***)

Commentary

A General Principle for Salvation

The Qur'an, here, points to a general and common principle when it proclaims that that which is worthy is 'truth' and 'reality'. With Allah, only 'true Faith 'and 'good deeds' are accepted.

Verily those who believed (***in the Prophet of Islam***)***, and those of Jews and Christians and Sabians, whoever believed*** (***truly***) ***in Allah and the Last Day, and worked righteously - for them is their reward with their Lord...*** (***2:62***)

Therefore, they will have no fear in the future or any grief for their past:

...and no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve. (***2:62***)

This verse, with nearly the same form, has occurred in Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:69, and with a further

variation on the same subject in Surah Al-Hajj, 22:17.

A careful study over the verses cited after this verse in Surah Al-Ma'idah, makes it clear that the Jews and Christians boasted that their religions were better than other religions. They imagined that all of Heaven would be for them alone, exclusively.

That very pride, perhaps, was seen in the manner of some Muslims, too. The current verse denotes that superficial faith, especially with the lack of doing good deeds, whether it proceeds from Muslims or Jews, Christians and Sabians, or the followers of any other religion, is worthless. Faith in Allah and the Last Day of Judgment is noted worthy by Allah when it is true, pure, and sincere, and accompanied with righteous deeds. Only this agendum deserves rewards and causes peace, security, and salvation for a believer.

Who are the Sabians?

There are a variety of opinions as to who the Sabians are. Here you are introduced to a few of them which are usually referred to. For example, the description cited in: *'An Arabic -English Lexicon'* Part 4, p. 1640, by Edward William Lame is, in brief, as follows:

The term /Sabi'un/ in the Kur'an is said to mean: 'Those who depart from one religion to another (The Sabians) said to worship the stars secretly, and openly to profess themselves to belong to the Christians: They are called /as-sabi'ah/ and as-sabi'un/ and they assert that they are of the religion of Sabi the son of Sheyth (or Sheth) the son of Adam: their appellation may also be pronounced /as-sabiyun/ or the Sabi'un are a certain class of the people who possess revealed scripture: or a people whose religion resembles that of the Christians, except that their Qiblah is towards the place where blows the (south, or southerly, wind called) Jannb... or according to some, their Qiblah is the Ka'bah: and they assert that they are of the religion of Noah. It is said that they are thus called in relation to Sabi the son of Lamak (or Lamech), the brother of Noah. It is said that they are worshippers of angels: and it said that they are the worshippers of the stars: and that their appellation is Arabic; from /saba/ he departed from a religion; or from / saba / he inclined because of their inclining from Truth to falsehood.

Another idea about 'Sabians', the appellation mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, is what the known scholar, Raqib, cites in his book, '*Mufradat*'. He says: *"They are a group of followers of Noah ('a), and their name mentioned along with the names of Believers, Jews and Christians, is also an evidence that they have been a religious group of people, believing in one of the heavenly religions who believed in God and the Hereafter, too."*

Some other commentators have said that the idea that some have called them pagans and star worshippers, or some others have considered them Zoroastrians, does not seem right, because Sabians believed that: first, the heavenly Holy Books were revealed to Adam ('a) and then to Noah ('a) and after him to Sam ('a), then to Ram ('a) and thereafter to Abraham ('a), then to Moses ('a) and after him to John ('a) the son of Zachariah, all of which were sent rightfully and Divinely.

Who are the 'People of the Book'?

The Qur'anic phrase /'ahlul kitab/ 'the People of the Book' has occurred in more than 30 different verses of the Qur'an where it mostly means both the Jews and the Christians or either of them.

The above-mentioned *Arabic-English Lexicon*, part one, page 121 explains the phrase /'ahlul-kitab/ thus: '(the people of the Scripture, or Bible; and) the readers, or reciters, of the Mosaic Law, and of the Gospel.'

Apparently, all the adherents of the prophets who had revealed Books, the clearest example of whom are Jews and Christians, may be called 'the People of the Book'. If so, we can also consider the Prophet's tradition when he was asked about the number of the Books Allah revealed and he (S) replied: "*One hundred and four books were revealed: ten books to Adam ('a), fifty books to Shith, thirty books to Ukhnukh (Enoch) and he is the first one who wrote by pen, ten books to Abraham, the Torah to Moses, the Injil to Jesus, Zabur to David, and the Qur'an to Muhammad (the Prophet of Islam).*"[1]

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 63-64

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُواْ مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُواْ مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with you, and raised the Tur** (**Mountain**) **above you** (**saying**): **'Hold you fast that which We have given you with the strength, and remember all that is therein** (**to do accordingly**); **haply you shall guard yourselves** (**against evil**)' (**2:63**)*

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

***Thereafter, you turned back, and had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah on you, you had certainly been among the losers** (**2:64**)*

Commentary

Hold the Signs of Allah Firmly!

In these verses, the subject of taking a covenant from the Children of Israel for the practicing of the contents of the Torah and, then, breaching that covenant, is pointed out. At first it says:

***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with you, and raised the Tur** (**Mountain**) **above you** (**saying**): **'Hold you fast that which We have given you with the strength, and remember all that is therein** (**to do accordingly**); **haply you shall guard yourselves** (**against evil**)' (**2:63**)*

But you people neglected your covenant.

Thereafter, you turned back, and had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah on you, you had certainly been among the losers (***2:64***)

The objective of the covenant, here, is the same that has been mentioned in verse 40 of the current Surah and what is in verse 83 and 84, which will be discussed later. The items of that covenant are: worshipping only Allah; treating parents, relations, orphans, and those in need with kindness; speaking to and treating people fairly; attending and being steadfast in ritual prayers, paying alms, avoiding shedding blood, the like of which had been mentioned in the Torah, too.

Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:12, also denotes that Allah had taken a covenant from the Children of Israel to believe in all of the Divine prophets and help them, and practice regular charity in the way of Allah. Then, at the end of the same verse, Allah promises that if they keep this covenant and actually do it, they will be allowed to abide in Paradise.

How was the Mountain Raised over the Israelites' Heads?

The leading famous commentator, the Late Tabors, has narrated from 'Abuzeyd' that when Moses ('a) returned from Mount Sinai and brought the Torah with him, he told his people that he had brought a Divine Book consisting of some religious instructions and rules about lawful and unlawful things. He told them to take the instructions that Allah had ordained and practically observe them in their lives.[2]

But the Jews, with the excuse that he ('a) had brought them difficult duties to perform, disobeyed and exceeded the limits. The Lord commanded the angels to raise a great big rock from Tur Mountain above them.

At that moment Moses ('a) announced that if they promised to perform the orders of Allah and repented for their disobedience, that punishment would be removed from over them, else they would be destroyed.

The Jews, who expected that the Mountain would fall on them at any moment, submitted and accepted the Torah and prostrated for Allah. Then, finally, that chastisement was warded off because of their repentance.

This very occurrence, with a little difference, is mentioned in verse 93 of the current Surah, 2:93; in Surah An-'Nisa, 4:104 and in Surah Al-A'raf, 7:171.

It is necessary to note, here, that as for the suspending mountain and as to how it could stand high above as a covering overhead for the Israelites, some commentators believe that it was by the command of Allah that Tur Mount was shaken and taken up from its place and, then, suspended above them as a canopy.[3] A more detailed explanation will be referred to when commenting on Surah Al-'A'raf, 7:171.

The above-mentioned event as described in the *Qur'an* was quite known by the Jews, who had these original statements in the Torah about it with them. Besides that, this event is also recorded in Talmud Aboda Sara 1/2 which says: 'I will cover you with the mountain like a roof', Talmud.

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 10, p. 476.
2. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 128.
3. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 128.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 8 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 65 - 74

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 65-66

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَواْ مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُواْ قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits on the Sabbath, so We said to them, 'Be you* (*as*) *apes despised and rejected'. (***2:65***)

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

So We made it an exemplary punishment to those who witnessed it and to their posterity and an admonishment to the pious ones. (***2:66***)

Commentary

Those Who Exceeded on the Sabbath!

These two verses, like the previous verses, point out the disobedience and transgression dominating the souls of the Jews, and their intensive interest in economic gain.

At first, it says:

And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits on the Sabbath... (***2:65***)

And, also, you have known that:

***…so We said to them: 'Be you* (*as*) *apes, despised and rejected'.* (*2:65*)**

Some may think that the present state of the Israelites and their apparent progress, after the first and the second World Wars or after their unlawful occupation of the Holy Land does not tally with this but yet they are hated by most nations and they have no rest in the real sense of the term, and the term 'a Jew' has passed into a proverb for a niggardly, miserly person –this is due to their own vanities and their hatred towards the others which, for example, they have shown in many places such as Palestine and Lebanon, both openly and hiddenly, during these recent years.

***So We made it an exemplary punishment to those who witnessed it and to their posterity and an admonishment to the pious ones.* (*2:66*)**

It is worthy to note that Imam al–Baqir ('a) and Imam as–Sadiq ('a) are narrated from, who, on the meaning of this verse, have said: *"The purpose of the phrase* ***/ ma bayna yadayha / 'those who witnessed it 'if the generation of that time, and the objective of the phrase / ma xalfaha / 'their posterity,*** *is about us Muslims."*[1] That is, that exemplary lesson was not exclusive to the Israelites alone, but it was meant for all of us, the Muslims, too; or all who come after them until the Day of Judgement and who do the same as they did.

Explanation: Divine Miracles of Moses ('A)

Whenever an apostle of Allah wanted to introduce himself to his people as a true, authentic Messenger of Allah, he would prove his claim by performing some miracles given by Him.

Here, it must be remembered that the following wonderful events wrought by divine and supernatural phenomena are counted in the Holy Qur'an as the miracles given to Moses ('a) as the proof of his prophethood; each of which will be discussed in its appropriate place.

They are as follows:

1. The Rod of Moses ('a) becoming a serpent. (7:107, 26:32)

2. The Palm of Moses ('a) shining brightly. (7:108, 26:33)

3. The dividing of the sea. (2:50)

4. The gushing of water from the rock. (2:60, 2:74)

5. The shower of manna and quails from heaven. (2:57)

6. The shadowing of the cloud over the Israelites' heads. (2:57, 2:93)

7. The raising of the dead to life. (2:56, 2:73)

8. The suspension of the mount above the heads of the people. (2:63)

9. The transformation of the transgressors into despised apes. (2:65, 7:166).

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 67–74

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُواْ بَقَرَةً قَالُواْ أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُواً قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

And **(*remember*)** ***when Moses said to his people: 'Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'. They said: 'Do you mock us?' He said: 'I take refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant!'*** **(*2:67*)**

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ فَارِضٌ وَلاَ بِكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُواْ مَا تُؤْمَرونَ

They said 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what she is.' Moses said: 'He says: Surely she is a cow neither old nor young, but of middle age; so do what you are commanded' **(*2:68*)**

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاء فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ

They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what colour she should be'. Moses replied: 'He says she should be a yellow cow, bright in colour, giving delight to the beholders' **(*2:69*)**

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ البَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاء اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ

They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what kind of cow must it be, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and, if Allah wills, we shall surely be guided aright.' **(*2:70*)**

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الأَرْضَ وَلاَ تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لاَّ شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُواْ الآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ

(***Moses***) ***said: 'Verily, He says: Verily, she is a cow not*** (***yet***) ***trained to till the soil or to water the fields; sound and without blemish. They said: 'Now you have brought the truth'. Then they offered her in sacrifice, though they had not the mind to do*** (***it***). (***2:71***)

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْساً فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

And (***remember***) ***when you killed a man and disputed thereon: but Allah was to bring forth what you were hiding.*** (***2:72***)

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

So, We said: 'Strike him (***the corpse***) ***with a part of it*** (***the sacrificed cow***)***'. Thus, Allah gives life to the dead and shows you of His signs, so that you might understand.*** (***2:73***)

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّهِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Then your hearts hardened after that as stones or even worse in hardness; for verily, among stones there are some from which rivers gush forth, and others that split asunder and water issues out of them, and others tumble down through fear of Allah, and Allah is not heedless of what you do. (***2:74***)

Commentary

The Story of the Israelites' Cow

Among what we have already studied about the Children of Israel in Surah Al-Baqarah, all of the facts were mentioned shortly and briefly. The event of the Israelites' Cow which is referred to in the above verses, in contrast to all of the previous incidents, is explained in detail and comprehensively. This is so, perhaps, for the reason that this story is mentioned in the Qur'an only once.

Besides that, there are many instructive subjects involved in it which requires such an extensive explication. One of these subjects which are vividly seen throughout the story is the persistency of the Israelites in seeking for excuses. It also illustrates their level of faith in the revelations brought forth by Moses (‘a). Most important of all is that the story provides clear emphatic evidence to the possibility of

the Resurrection.

As it is understood from the Holy Qur'an and its commentaries, the incident was described that one of the Israelites was murdered in a mysterious way, in which his murderer was not at all known.

So, there arose a dispute among the different tribes and divisions of the people as to who murdered the man. Every tribe accused the members of another tribe of the crime and announced that the members of its own tribe were innocent. For its judgement and solution, the problem was brought to the Apostle Moses (ʿa). On one hand, that crime was committed hiddenly, and the murderer of the man could not be found by any ordinary means employed at that time. On the other hand, that dispute might have led to a great complicated disturbance among the Children of Israel. Then, finally Moses (ʿa), by the help of the Grace and Guidance of Allah and through a miraculous way, whose explanation will come later, solved the problem.

The Qur'an begins the description of the event as thus:

***And** (**remember**) **when Moses said to his people: 'Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'. They said: 'Do you mock us?' He said: 'I take refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant!'** (**2:67**)*

That is, causing division and mocking others are acts of the ignorant and never is a prophet of Allah of such people.

When the Israelites realized that it was not a mockery and the matter was serious,

***They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to what she is,'...** (**2:68**)*

The phrase: '*Ask your Lord'* which is repeated several times in their demands, carries a kind of hidden impoliteness and ridicule in itself. It seems that they considered the Lord of Moses (ʿa) a different Lord from their own Lord.

However, as a reply to their demand:

***Moses said: 'He says: Surely she is a cow neither old nor young, but of middle age;'...** (**2:68**)*

In order to stop them from prolonging the matter by bringing new excuses forth to postpone that fulfilment of the command of Allah, at the end of the statement, it has been added:

***'...so do what you are commanded'.** (**2:68**)*

But, they still continued their insistence and obstinacy.

***They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what colour she should be'. Moses replied: 'He says she should be a yellow cow, bright in colour, giving delight to the beholders.'** (**2:69**)*

Anyhow, this cow should be very good and interesting in colour. The colour should be so bright and beautiful that any beholder wonders and becomes delighted when looking at it.

It is amazing that they were not satisfied with that and went on seeking for excuses by which, every time, they made the fulfilment of their duty more difficult.

A tradition says that Imam Ridha' (‘a) has said that any cow would have been sufficient, but they imposed the particulars upon themselves, and the more they did so, the more did Allah impose the restrictions as a punishment for their persistent demands for unnecessary details.

All this, while Moses (‘a), acting under inspiration, was driving them to purchase a particular cow belonging to a particular man who was very holy and pious and deserved to be favoured. They had to pay him an enormous price for this cow which was the only one then available. Hence, they were very near to not doing it.[2]

They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what kind of a cow must it be for surely to us the cows are all alike and, if Allah wills, we shall surely be guided aright'. (***2:70***)

Again,

(***Moses***) ***said: 'Verily, He says: Verily, she is a cow not*** (***yet***) ***trained to till the soil or to water the fields; sound and without blemish.' They said: 'Now you have brought the truth'...*** (***2:71***)

So, they tried with much effort to find that particular cow, and, finally, they found it.

...Then they offered her in sacrifice, though they had not the mind to do (***it***). (***2:71***)

After describing this story in detail, again the Qur'an retells it briefly, and generally through the following two verses, thus:

And (***remember***) ***when you killed a man and disputed thereon: but Allah was to bring forth what you were hiding.*** (***2:72***)

So, We said: 'Strike him (***the corpse***) ***with a part of it*** (***the sacrificed cow***)***'. Thus, Allah gives life to the dead and shows you of His signs, so that you might understand.*** (***2:73***)

In the last verse of the verses under discussion, the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites is referred to. It points out that after witnessing all these events and observing the Signs of Allah and the miraculous evidence that Moses (‘a) prepared for them, yet their hearts became hard, even harder than stone, because, there are some rocks that bring forth water, or shatter and fall down for the fear of Allah. It says:

Then your hearts hardened after that as stones or even worse in hardness; for verily, among stones there are some from which rivers gush forth, and others that split asunder and water

issues out of them and others tumble down through fear of Allah… (***2:74***)

So, your hearts are even harder than these rocks, because neither a spring of passion, love, or knowledge flows out of them nor tremble they from the fear of Allah. Then in the last sentence of the verse, it says:

…and Allah is not heedless of what you do. (***2:74***)

This is a subtle threat against this group of Israelites and all others who behave like them or do the same as they did.

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 130.
2. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 88-89.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 9 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 75 - 86

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 75-77

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلاَمَ اللّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

What! Do you then hope that they would believe in you (***in Faith***)***, and a party among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then perverted it after they had understood it, and they know*** (***this***) (***2:75***)

وَإِذَا لَقُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلاَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىَ بَعْضٍ قَالُواْ أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَآجُّوكُم بِهِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ

And when they meet those who have Faith, they say: 'We believe', but when they are alone with one another, they say: 'Do you speak to them of what Allah has revealed to you, that they may thereby dispute with you about this before your Lord? Have you then no sense?' (***2:76***)

أَوَلاَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

Do they not know that Allah knows what they hide and what they make known? (***2:77***)

Occasion of Revelation

Upon the occasion of the revelation of these first two verses, some of the commentators have narrated from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) who has said: “A group of the Jews, who had not enmity with the truth, when they met the Muslims, they would tell them of what had been mentioned in the Torah about the specialties of Prophet Muhammad (S). The leaders of the Jews understood the matter and told them to avoid informing Muslims of what was cited in the Torah about the epithets of Prophet Muhammad (S) lest they would argue with the Jews about it before their Lord. Then this verse was revealed.”[1]

Commentary

A Futile Expectation!

As noted from these verses, the Qur’an has discontinued the story of the Israelites and, with an instructive conclusion, has turned to the Muslim believers, saying:

What! Do you then hope that they would believe in you (***in Faith***)***, and a party among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then perverted it after they had understood it, and they know*** (***this***) (***2:75***)

Therefore, when you see that they reject the inspiring words of the Qur’an and the miracles of the Holy Prophet of Islam (S), you should not be annoyed. They are the children of the same people who, as the elected members of the tribe, went to Mount Sinai, heard the words of Allah, and understood His instructions, but when they returned they altered them.

It is perceived from the phrase:

...and a party among them indeed... (***2:75***)

that not all of them but a party, who probably formed the majority of them, were of those who perverted Allah’s Words.

It is cited in *‘Asbab-un-Nuzul’* that when some of the Jews returned from Mount Sinai, they told their people: *‘We heard that Allah ordered Moses,’ whenever you can do My instructions do them, but when you cannot, leave them’,* and this was the first perversion.

However, at the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S), it was expected that the Jews would accept this religion before others embraced it, because they were the followers of the Book, whereas the pagans were not. Besides that, they had learnt the epithets of the Prophet of Islam (S) from their own books. But the Holy Qur’an says that, considering their previous bad reputation, your hope is of no avail. The reason is that some deviated characteristics which dominated the spirits of this group caused them to

separate from truth, though it was well within the realm of their ability to embrace it.

The next verse uncovers another bitter fact about this deceitful hypocritical group. It says:

And when they meet those who have Faith, they say: 'We believe' but when they are alone with one another, they say: 'Do you speak to them of what Allah has revealed to you, that they may thereby dispute with you about this before your Lord? Have you then no sense? (***2:76***).

In commenting on this very verse, this probability also exists that the initial words of the verse are about the hypocritical Jews who pretended to be believers in the presence of the Muslims but in their absence, they denied it. They even scorned those pure-hearted Jews who had conveyed the secrets of the Torah to the Muslims.

At any rate, this is a confirmation to what was said in the previous verse that a group with such attributes governing their spirits should not be expected to become faithful.

The phrase: /fataha Allahu 'alaykum/ ***'what Allah has revealed to you'*** may mean: 'the Divine command which was in the authority of the Children of Israel'. Or the phrase may refer to the idea that Allah had opened the doors of the divine secrets and the prophecies about the coming religion unto them.

It is noteworthy that this verse clearly shows that the Faith of this hypocritical group in Allah was so weak and hollow that they considered Him as an ordinary person and imagined that if they could conceal a fact from the Muslims, it would be concealed from Allah, too.

Then, in the next verse, it frankly says:

Do they not know that Allah knows what they hide and what they make known? (***2:77***)

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 78-79

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَظُنُّونَ

And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but only fancies and mere conjectures. (***2:78***)

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَـذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ لِيَشْتَرُواْ بِهِ ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah,' so that they may sell it for a little price. So woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to

them for what they earn. (***2:79***)

Occasion of Revelation

A group of the learned men of the Jews altered the epithets of the Holy Prophet (S) mentioned in the Torah. This perversion was contrived to protect their social positions and benefits which they used to obtain from their common people over the years.

When the Prophet of Islam (S) announced his mission and they recognized his epithets coincided with what was mentioned in the Torah, they were afraid that their profits would be endangered if the fact became evident. Therefore, they wrote some epithets completely different from what was actually cited in the Torah.

The ordinary Jews, who had heard the true epithets of the Prophet of Islam (S), more or less, asked their scholars frequently whether this Prophet was the same promised prophet whose advent they had given them glad tidings of. Then the Jewish savants and scholars decided to recite some perverted verses from the Torah to them in order to make them content thereby.

Commentary

The Jewish Learned Men's Plots of Oppression Against the Laymen

Following the previous description about the vicious deeds of the Jews, these verses divide them into two definite groups: the laymen and the deceitful learned men. A few of the Jewish scholars, of course, accepted the truth and believed in Islam and joined the community of Muslims. It says:

And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but only fancies and mere conjectures (***2:78***)***.***

The phrase /ummiyu/ 'the illiterates' is the plural form of the term /ummi/ which, here, means an illiterate person who remains the same in his native endowments as he was when he was born without any external education or training from anyone whosoever; and this state is ordinarily known as illiteracy. Or, this case also occurs because some mothers, because of their naive motherly love for their children, ignorantly do not let their children separate from them and go to schools to study.

The term /'amaniyy/ is the plural form of /'amniyyah/ 'conjecture', and, here, it may refer to the privileges, vain desires, wishful thinking and mere conjectures of the Jews that they considered for themselves.

The second group was the Jewish priests and savants who often altered the facts for their own benefit, as the Qur'an says:

So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say: 'This is from Allah,' so that they may sell it for a little price. So, woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to

them for what they earn (***2:79***).

From the last meanings of the verse, it is well understood that they had used impious means and had come up with an incorrect conclusion.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 80-82

وَقَالُواْ لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلاَّ أَيَّاماً مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِندَ اللّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

And they said: 'The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days'. Say: 'Have you taken such a promise from Allah, for He never fails in His promise? Or do you speak against Allah what you do not know?' (***2:80***)

بَلَى مَن كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Yea! whoever earns evil and is encompassed by his sins, these are the inhabitants of the Fire: therein shall they abide forever. (***2:81***)

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And those who have Faith and do deeds of righteousness – they are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein shall they abide forever. (***2:82***)

Commentary

The Qur'an, here, points to one of the false statements of the Jews of which they were proud and that very pride was the origin of part of their deviation. Thus, the Qur'an responds to it:

And they said: 'The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days'. Say: 'Have you taken such a promise from Allah, for He never fails in His promise? Or do you speak against Allah what you do not know?' (***2:81***)

One of the most obvious reasons for the stubbornness and egoism of this group is their belief in the preference of the Jewish race over all other races, and that they are different from other nations, and that their sinners will have to tolerate the Fire only for a few days as their punishment and, therefore, Paradise will be theirs exclusively forever.

This claim of privileges is not logical in any aspect, because, before Allah, there is no difference between

the members of the human race from the point of rewards or punishments for their deeds.

Can they support the expectation to their claim of being exceptional among nations and therefore receiving special treatment regarding the general law of penalties by describing something they have done to deserve it?

However, the above verse with a logical statement refuses their vain imaginations and denotes that their claims depict one of these two conditions: they should either have taken a particular promise from Allah on the matter – that they have not – or, they tell lies and calumniate against Him.

The next verse expresses a common and universal law which is logical from any point of view. It says:

Yea! whoever earn evil and is encompassed by his sins, – these are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein shall they abide forever (***2:81***)

This is a general rule for the sinners belonging to any sect, nation, in any locality, and at any time.

There is also a universal, general law for the pious believers, which the next verse announces:

And those who have Faith and do deeds of righteousness – they are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein shall they abide forever (***2:82***)

Explanation: Earning Sin

The Arabic term /kasb/ and /'iktisab/ both mean: 'to earn or gain something willingly and consciously'.

Earnings are received in return for something done to profit one's self. This is quite different from merely falling into evil. It is to selfishly seek one's own gain that is evil. One sin leads to another sin and thus the conscience of the individual gradually becomes deadened until sinning becomes natural and normal for that person and he is totally abandoned to evil and attempts to justify his actions and to deny that he deserves eternal punishment. The law of cause and effect works in its natural order in the case of evil as in the case of virtue. Those who devote themselves wholly to evil, must naturally find themselves beset on every side by the consequent evil effects of the causative evil factors wrought by the individual. But those who struggle against evil, however long it may take for them to overcome it, the inclination towards the evil, cannot be considered equivalent to those who are out to earn evil. Those who struggle to overcome evil hate and detest it and the individual's earnest and sincere effort to overcome evil, naturally ends in the triumph of good in the human nature. With this endeavour of good against evil, the natural consequence of the struggle strengthens the nobility in the individual's personality. But, purposefully yielding to evil with a selfish motive – for any selfish gains, gradually erects a fortress of evil for the individual so that the access of good becomes more and more difficult and ultimately renders the individual's approach to any goodness as impossible. As the individual is totally lost, for all times, to evil, he convicts himself to the perpetual consequences of the evil all around him forever.

These kinds of people are those who are referred to, later, in Surah Al-Baqarah which says:

Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter, for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped. (***2:86***)

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 83-86

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لاَ تَعْبُدُونَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَاناً وَذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ حُسْناً وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنكُمْ وَأَنتُم مِّعْرِضُونَ

And (***remember***) ***when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel*** (***instructing***)***: 'You shall not worship any but Allah; and*** (***you shall do***) ***good to*** (***your***) ***parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans, and the needy, and speak kind words to people, keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates*** (***zakat***)***'. Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you backslide*** (***even now***) (***2:83***)

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لاَ تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءكُمْ وَلاَ تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

And (***remember***) ***when We made a covenant with you: 'You shall not shed your blood, nor expel one another from your dwellings' then you confirmed it while you bore witness.*** (***2:84***)

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَـؤُلاء تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقاً مِّنكُم مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَى تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاء مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلاَّ خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Yet you kill one another and expel a group of your people from their dwellings, helping others against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them – yet their very expulsion was forbidden for you. Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (***another***) ***part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but disgrace, in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection to be consigned to the most terrible punishment? And Allah is not heedless of what you do.*** (***2:85***)

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter; for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped. (***2:86***)

Commentary

The Breachers of the Covenant!

In a few of the verses mentioned before, the covenant of the Children of Israel was hinted at, but no details were given about it. Through the verses under discussion, Allah reminds them of some of the items of this covenant. Most of these items – or all of them – should be counted as the fundamental principles and permanent laws of the Divine religions, because this same covenant and these instructions, in some form or other, are comprehensively found in every religion.

In these verses, the Qur'an severely scorns and blames the Jews because they broke their covenant and threatens them with disgrace in the life of this world and the most grievous punishment in the Hereafter.

This covenant, that the Children of Israel were witnesses of and confessed to, contains the following items:

1. Monotheism and worshipping Allah, as the verse says:

***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel** (**instructing**): **'You shall not worship any but Allah**... (**2:83**)*

2. ***...and** (**you shall do**) **good to** (**your**) **parents**... (**2:83**)*

3. ***...and to the near of kin and to the orphans, and the needy**... (**2:83**)*

4. ***...and speak kind words to people, ...** (**2:83**)*

5. ***...keep up the prayer**... (**2:83**)*

6. ***...and pay the poor-rates** (**zakat**)'. **Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you backslide** (**even now**). (**2:83**)*

7. ***And** (**remember**) **when We made a covenant with you**: **'You shall not shed your***

blood… (***2:84***)

8. ***…nor expel one another from your dwellings'…*** (***2:84***)

9. ***…then you confirmed it while you bore witness.*** (***2:84***) (This item of the covenant is perceived from the sentence: ***Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in*** (***another***) ***part?*** (***2:85***))

But you disregarded many of these aspects of your covenant with Allah.

Yet you kill one another and expel a group of your people from their dwellings, helping others against them in sin and enmity… (***2:85***)

All of these deeds you did are a breach of the covenant you had taken with Allah.

…and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them – yet their very expulsion was forbidden for you. (***2:85***)

It is surprising that you, in paying ransom, and setting your captives free, comply with the ordinances of the Torah and the Divine Covenant:

…Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (***another***) ***part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but disgrace, in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection to be consigned to the most terrible punishment? And Allah is not heedless of what you do.*** (***2:85***)

Then, He, the Just, will take all of them into account and will judge upon you according to your deeds in the Divine Court of Justice.

The last of the verses under discussion, in fact, states their main motive for doing these contradictory actions. It says:

Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter… (***2:86***)

For this reason:

…for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped. (***2:86***)

Explanation: The Best Strategy for the Survival of Nations

These verses have been revealed about the Children of Israel, but they contain a series of universal laws for the whole human race throughout the world. These laws consist of some advice for those nations who wish to survive and to exist successfully, as well as the secrets of failure and destruction.

From the viewpoint of the Qur'an, nations will be happy and able to continue living when the individuals of that nation, avoiding sins, attach themselves to the greatest Power and rely on that Everlasting Source for help in all conditions. It is obvious that this Origin can be none but Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, they should obey Allah and bow only to Him, i.e. being sincere unto Him alone in obedience. If nations follow this law, they will be afraid of none. Genuine sincerity and perfect intentions of a believer in the way of Allah, do not tolerate the yielding of himself, in any regard, to anything or anybody else other than the One and Only True God, Allah. For it will mean the individual's surrender to his self which is nothing more than surrender to Satan which is the equivalent of worshipping him.

As it was already pointed out, the means of salvation, i.e. for a nation to survive and endure successfully, is firm adherence of its members to the Divine Covenant and their faithful and loyal attachment to the divinely commissioned guides. It is obvious that misdeeds or sins weaken faith, adherence, and the love of goodness, and the excess of it may result in the total severance of the Holy connection, and in the individuals becoming totally lost in the darkness of infidelity, hence eternal punishment and no salvation in either this world or the coming world will be the result for such a nation.

These verses of the Holy Qur'an, if studied properly and judged dispassionately almost suffice to illustrate what is meant by the religion Islam and what kind of life Islam invites its believers, or all nations to live. And if the members of nations act upon these commandments, I how peaceful, pleasant, and enjoyable will be the life here on earth.

These are on one side, but on the other side, the secret of the failure and defeat of nations, which finally leads to their destruction and abolishment, lies in the existence of hate and enmity between them and between the members inside each nation, i.e. being heedless to the above-mentioned commandments. Such a nation will soon perish because of disregarding Allah*'s* covenant by not relying on Him, by not respecting and helping their parents, family members, kindreds, neighbours, and all fellow men, by shedding blood and by not observing the rights of others by expelling them out of their houses or lands in order to occupy their properties:

...You shall not shed your blood, nor expel one another from your dwellings... (***2:84***)

And, finally, one of the factors of the destruction of nations is unjust discrimination in the execution of laws, i.e. when they observe those laws which protect their personal profits but neglect what is beneficial for the society.

...Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (***another***) ***part?*** (***2:85***)

And these are some of the causes of either the development or failure of nations from the viewpoint of the Qur'an.

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 142.

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SHARES

Section 10 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 87 – 101

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 87-88

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لاَ تَهْوَى أَنفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقاً كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقاً تَقْتُلُونَ

And We gave Moses the Book, and after him sent Messengers in succession; and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear Signs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit. Is it that whensoever (thereafter) there came to you a Messenger, with what yourselves desire not, you became arrogant? Some you denied, and others you slay. (***2:87***)

وَقَالُواْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلاً مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ

And they said: 'Our hearts are covered'. Nay! Allah has cursed them for their disbelief. Little is that which they believe. (***2:88***)

Commentary

Their Covered Hearts

In these verses, again, the Children of Israel are addressed. Yet the concepts and criteria mentioned in them are universal and apply to all.

At first, it says:

And We gave Moses the Book, and after him sent Messengers in succession... (***2:87***)

There came Messengers such as David, Solomon, Joshua, Zacharia and John.

...and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear Signs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit... (***2:87***)

...Is it that whensoever (***thereafter***) ***there came to you a Messenger, with what yourselves desire not, you became arrogant?*** (***2:87***)

This domination of desire on you was so intense that from among those prophets:

...Some you denied, and others you slay. (***2:87***)

This verse makes a fact clear that the Divine apostles, when communicating their prophecies, on the path of Allah, were heedless of the oppositions of the materialists. And, it must be so, because a correct sincere leadership is not anything save that. If prophets tend to follow the unconditioned desires of people and adapt themselves to people's selfish inclinations, they will be the followers of the misled, rather than being a divine leader for the followers of the path of truth.

And they said: 'Our hearts are covered.' Nay! Allah has cursed them for their disbelief... (***2:88***)

And it is for the same reason that:

...Little is that which they believe. (***2:88***)

The above sentence may be about the Jews who either rejected the prophets (S) or killed them. It is also probable that it refers to the Jews who were contemporary with the Holy Prophet (S) and used to inflexibly oppose him with obstinacy and enmity. However, it states the fact that Man, following his desires, may reach a point that he be cursed by Allah and be deprived of His Mercy. It is in this case that his heart is enclosed in a covering so tight that the truth can rarely penetrate into it.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 89-90

وَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم مَّا عَرَفُواْ كَفَرُواْ بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّه عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

When there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming what was with them - and, from before, they had been praying for victory over those who rejected the Truth - when there came to them that which they recognized (***to be Truth***)***, they disbelieved in it. So Allah's curse is on the disbelievers.*** (***2:89***)

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْاْ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ أَن يَكْفُرُواْ بِمَا أَنَزَلَ اللّهُ بَغْياً أَن يُنَزِّلُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَآؤُواْ بِغَضَبٍ

عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

Evil is the thing they have sold themselves for, denying in what Allah has sent down, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomever He wills of His servants, and they have incurred Wrath upon Wrath, and for the disbelievers awaits a humiliating punishment. (***2:90***)

Commentary

A Religious Adherent and an Infidel!

The words in these verses are again about the Jews and their lives. They formerly had an ardent love and were desirous for the advent of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (S) for which they had settled in Medina waiting to see the signs of the new Prophet (S) about which they had studied in their heavenly Book, the Torah. From before, they usually gave each other the happy tidings of the advent of such a Prophet (S) and they hoped that his appearance would help them to be able to defeat their enemies. But when they received a Book from Allah, the Qur'an, which contained the same message that the Jews had had with them, in the Torah, they rejected it.

When there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming what was with them – and, from before, they had been praying for victory over those who rejected the Truth – when there came to them that which they recognized (***to be Truth***)***, they disbelieved in it. So Allah's curse is on the disbelievers.*** (***2:89***)

Yet, it sometimes happens that a person eagerly pursues a certain fact, but when he reaches it and finds it opposite to his personal interests, he, being affected by his low desires, refuses it and abandons it, or even sometimes he stands against it.

In fact, the Jews have willingly acquired defeat. Those people who, with the purpose of accepting and following the promised Prophet (S) had emigrated from their own homes and, with many difficulties, had settled in Medina in order to attain their goal, ultimately joined the camp of the pagans and hostile disbelievers. Therefore, the Qur'an says:

Evil is the thing they have sold themselves for, denying what Allah has sent down, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomever He wills of His servants... (***2:90***)

It seemed they expected that the promised prophet (S) would be one from among the Children of Israel. They were displeased of the Qur'an having been sent down to someone else. Then they, surrendering themselves to infidelity and disbelief in the Truth, showed their envy to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). Therefore, at the end of the verse, it says:

...and they have incurred Wrath upon Wrath, and for the disbelievers await a humiliating punishment. (***2:90***)

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 91-93

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ قَالُواْ نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرونَ بِمَا وَرَاءهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنبِيَاء اللّهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

When it is said to them: 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' they said: 'We believe (***only***) ***in what was sent down to us*** (***before***)***.' But they disbelieve in what is beyond that, while it is the Truth confirming what is with them. Say: 'Why then were you slaying the Prophets of Allah in former times, if you were*** (***indeed***) ***faithful?'*** (***2:91***)

وَلَقَدْ جَاءكُم مُّوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

And, also, Moses came to you with clear signs; yet you took to worship of the Calf after him (***in his absence***) ***and you were*** (***willful***) ***wrongdoers.*** (***2:92***)

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُواْ مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُواْ قَالُواْ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأُشْرِبُواْ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

And (***remember***) ***when We made a covenant with you, and raised the Mount, above you,*** (***saying***)***: 'Hold you fast that which We have given you with the strength and hear*** (***Our commandments***)***'. They said: 'We hear and disobey,' and they were made to imbibe*** (***the love of***) ***the Calf into their hearts because of their disbelief. Say: 'Evil is what your faith bids you if you be, indeed, faithful'.*** (***2:93***)

Commentary

Racial Bigotries of the Jews

In commenting on the previous verses, it was said that the Jews tolerated a lot of trouble and toil on the path of reaching the Prophet (S) that the Torah had promised, but when he (S) came, they did not believe in him, because of envy, or for the reason that this prophet (S) was not from the Children of Israel, or because their personal interests were in danger.

Now, through the verses under discussion, the Qur'an refers to the racial bigotries of the Jews by which they are known throughout the world. It says:

When it is said to them: 'Believe in what Allah has sent down.' They said: 'We believe (***only***) ***in what was sent down to us*** (***before***)***.' But they disbelieve in what is beyond that...*** (***2:91***)

The Jews believed neither in the Evangel (Injil) nor in the Qur'an, but they paid attention only to the racial aspects and their personal benefits.

The Jews said that they believed in what had been revealed to, them, i.e. to the Israeli prophets ('a) and they would not believe in anything revealed to a non-Israeli prophet (i.e. the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S)). The reply to this arrogance is given in this verse saying that that which has been sent down to the Holy Prophet (S) is truth verifying that which is in the Book with them, referring to their prophecy proclaimed in Duet. 18/15-18. And now, the Qur'an says:

...while it is the Truth confirming what is with them... (***2:91***)

Then, the Holy Qur'an uncovers their falsehood and says that their excuse for their disbelief is that Prophet Muhammad (S) is not from among them:

...Say: 'Why then were you slaying the Prophets of Allah in former times, if you were (***indeed***) ***faithful?'*** (***2:91***)

If they truly believed in the Torah, the Divine Book in which murder is considered a major sin, they would not slay the great prophets of Allah.

Furthermore, this statement that they say:

...We believe (***only***) ***in what was sent down to us*** (***before***)***'...*** (***2:91***)

is a clear deviation from the path of Monotheism, or, in other words, it is, in itself, blasphemy. This is a kind of arrogance and selfishness whether it be in the form of a personal issue or racial one.

The purpose of Monotheism is to eradicate these disgraceful habits from the unity of human beings so that they accept Allah*'s* commandments merely because they are issued from that Origin.

In other words, if the acceptance of the Divine instructions is only on the condition that they be sent down to us, it is, in fact, disbelief, rather than 'belief', or it is infidelity rather than 'faithfulness' in Islam. The acceptance of such instructions is not at all true evidence of Faith.

It is worthy to note that when the above verse says:

When it is said to them: 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' (***2:91***)

it refers neither to Muhammad (S) nor to Moses ('a) nor to Jesus ('a). It merely says:

Believe in what Allah has sent down. (***2:91***)

To make their falsehood clearer, in the next verse, the Qur'an provides further evidence against them. It says:

And, also, Moses came to you with clear signs; yet you took to worship of the Calf after him (***in his absence***)***, and you were*** (***willful***) ***wrongdoers.*** (***2:92***)***.***

The Qur'an tells the Jews that if you are true and you believe in your prophet, why did you worship the Calf after those clear signs and that monotheistic evidence? What kind of faith is it that when Moses (ʿa) goes to the Mount, in his absence, it escapes from your hearts and immediately infidelity is substituted therein; or the Calf takes the place of Monotheism?

Yes, with this wrong action, you committed an injustice both to yourselves and your society, and to your coming generations.

In the subsequent verse, the Holy Qur'an cites another example proving the meagreness of their claim. It refers to the covenant of Mount Sinai and says:

And (***remember***) ***when We made a covenant with you, and raised the Mount, above you,*** (***saying***)***: 'Hold you fast that which We have given you with the strength and hear*** (***Our commandments***)***'. They said: 'We hear and disobey,' and they were made to imbibe*** (***the love of***) ***the Calf into their hearts because of their disbelief*** (***2:93***)***.***

Yes, blasphemy and mammonism, whose symbol was the love of the golden Samaritan Calf, had influenced their hearts and took root throughout their souls. That was why they forgot their Lord.

Strange! What sort of Faith is it that condones both the slaying of prophets and the worshipping of the Calf, but neglects the observance of firm Divine Covenants?

Yes,

…Say: 'Evil is what your faith bids you if you be, indeed, faithful' (***2:93***)

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 94-101

قُلْ إِن كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ عِندَ اللّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّن دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُاْ الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Say: 'If the Last Abode with Allah is yours exclusively and not for other people, then long for death – if you are truthful'. (***2:94***)

وَلَن يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

But never will they long for death, because of what their hands have sent forth; for Allah who knows the unjust. (***2:95***)

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُواْ يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَن يُعَمَّرَ وَاللّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ

***Indeed, you will find them the greediest of people for life, even more than those who associate partners* (*to Allah*)*; each one of them is covetous to live* (*even*) *a thousand years, yet the prolongation of his life shall not remove him further away from the punishment. Allah sees what they do.* (*2:96*)**

قُلْ مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

***Say* (*O' Muhammad*)*: 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, who brought down* (*the Qur'an*) *upon your heart by Allah's leave, confirming what was before it, and a guidance and glad tidings for the believers'* (*2:97*)**

مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلّهِ وَمَلآئِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ

***And whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His Messengers, Gabriel and Michael* (*should know that*) *Allah is surely an enemy to the infidels.* (*2:98*)**

وَلَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقُونَ

***Verily, We have sent down to you clear Signs, and none denies them except the transgressors.* (*2:99*)**

أَوَكُلَّمَا عَاهَدُواْ عَهْداً نَّبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ

***What! Whenever they made a covenant, a group of them cast it aside? Nay, most of them do not* (*truly*) *believe.* (*2:100*)**

وَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللّهِ وَرَاء ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

***And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, a part of them who were given the Book cast the Book of Allah behind their backs, as though they knew* (*it*) *not!* (*2:101*)**

Commentary

Say: 'If the Last Abode with Allah is yours exclusively and not for other people, then long for death – if you are truthful'. (***2:94***)

From the former verses, it was understood that the Jews claimed that they would not be touched by the Fire but for a few days when they worshipped the Calf, saying:

…'The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days.' (***2:80***)

Also, when they were told to believe in Allah's revelation, they replied that they would believe only in their Book, the Torah:

'We believe (***only***) ***in what was sent down to us*** (***before***)***.'*** (***2:91***)

They imagined that they were the only people who would be qualified for salvation and felicity, while other nations would be punished and receive eternal destruction in the Hereafter. Then, to cancel this kind of idea and to verify that the case is not as they considered, it is told them:

'…then long for death – if you are truthful.' (***2:94***)***.***

The Messenger of Allah is commanded to tell them that if the abode of the Hereafter and the blessings of Heaven are exclusively theirs, they must strive to reach such bliss and invoke for death in order to get rid of the disasters and miseries of this world. It is in this situation that they would attain eternal happiness which they falsely think belongs to them alone.

But never will they long for death, because of what their hands have sent forth; …for Allah well knows the unjust. (***2:95***)

And in another occurrence, as a protest to them, the Qur'an says:

…If you think that you are friends to Allah, to the exclusion of (***other***) ***men, then invoke your desire for death if you are truthful!*** (***62:6***)***.***

Yes, a sincere friend desires to be with his friend, someone in love wishes to see one's love, and a seeker of a particular thing is anxious and desirous to obtain that which one is seeking.

Worldly affairs and materialism often stand as a curtain or barrier between Allah and His servants. They usually do not let one approach Him and be acquainted with his / her Creator deservingly. Therefore, the true sincerity towards Him is the desire of death. Then, here, to unveil the falsehood of the statement of the Jews, Allah announces that if they truly believe that the future abode with Allah is exclusively theirs and think that only they are those who are the favoured people of Allah, not any other people, they must invoke death with their tongues, hearts, and actions to reach Him without any natural barrier.

Indeed, you will find them the greediest of people for life, even more than those who associate partners (***to Allah***) ***…*** (***2:96***)

But they never invoke death because they are the greediest of all people for the life of this world. They love the long life of this world even much more than pagans and idolators.

…each one of them is covetous to live (***even***) ***a thousand years…*** (***2:96***)

Besides their hideous deeds and that they do not seek death in order to meet the Lord, each of them would like to live one thousand years.

The figure ***'one thousand years'*** metaphorically refers to the idea that they wish to live a long life. This is evidence to their lie and they know that neither the Last Abode with Allah is theirs, nor are they the friends of Allah. They arrogantly state these things, based on bigotry, in order to tell the Muslims that both the Jews and their ancestral religion are right, and Muslims are wrong and their religion is untrue. Then Allah, by this clear evidence, made their falsehood manifest by stating that the friends of Allah are those who are desirous of death to attain their goal.

…yet the prolongation of his life shall not remove him further away from the punishment. Allah sees what they do. (***2:96***)

That is, the Jews will never long for death, then how can they desire a long life when it does not save them from the punishment? Yet, they are the greediest people for the low life of this world which can be a barrier obstructing entrance into the everlasting felicity of the life in the coming world. Furthermore, the members of this group having belief in the Hereafter and the life after death are greedier for the life of this world than pagans and blasphemers, who wrongly believe that Man will be destroyed and perish after death.

Say (***O' Muhammad***)***: 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel…'*** (***2:97***)

The commentators believe that, as 'Abdullah Ibn Abbas cites, the occasion of revelation of this verse was as follows:

One of the scholars of the Jews by the name of Ibn Suriya, with a group of Jewish people from Fadak, was attending the Holy Prophet (S) when he put forth some questions to test his gift of prophecy. Thereby being convinced that Muhammad (S) was a true prophet of Allah, he asked as to which of Allah's angels had conveyed the Divine messages to him, and he (S) answered that Gabriel had.

The Jew said he would not believe, as Gabriel was the enemy of his people and he is the angel of punishment, annoyance, displeasure, indignation, and execution; while Michael was not, and if Michael would have been the one who came down to the Prophet (S), then they would believe in him (S). So, Allah (SWT) sent down this verse and told the Holy Prophet (S) to say that he who is the enemy of Gabriel, is the enemy of the one:

***'...who brought down* (*the Qur'an*) *upon your heart by Allah's leave, confirming what was before it, and a guidance and glad tidings for the believers.'* (*2:97*)**

Thus, the Qur'an attests to the rightfulness of all the heavenly Books such as the Torah, the Evangil, Psalms of David, the Written Sheets (Scriptures), and what Allah had sent to other prophets ('a).

The word /hudan/ 'a guidance' here, may refer to the guidance of the Qur'an for all of the believing members of the Jinn and humans. The guidance is apportioned to the believers perhaps for the reason that it is only the believers who are benefited by the Qur'an, so therefore, the glad tidings are given to them.

Now, this verse reiterates the subject matter of the previous verse but with more emphasis and accompanied with a threat. It says:

***And whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His Messengers, Gabriel and Michael* (*should know that*) *Allah is surely an enemy to the infidels.* (*2:98*)**

This statement is an indication to the meaning that these instances are not separable. The Essence of Allah, angels, all His Messengers, Gabriel and Michael or any other angels, from this point of view, are all the same and to have enmity with one of them is, in fact, having enmity with the others.

In other words, Allah's ordinances, which are helpful on the path to development of the human race, have been revealed from His Origin unto prophets (S) by means of angels. And if there be any difference between their missions, it is a difference of the division of responsibilities, not a contrast in missions. They are all alongside the path of the same goal. So, being an enemy against one of them is showing enmity against Allah.

Upon the occasion of revelation of verse 99, there is a narration from Ibn Abbas who said: *"Ibn Suriya, a Jewish scholar, told the Prophet (S): 'O Muhammad, you have not brought anything for us that we understand it, and also the Lord has not sent a clear sign to you so that we follow you thereby'. Then, Allah sent down this verse which was a frank vivid answer to that statement.* [1]

None Denies Divine Signs Save the Transgressors!

Through this verse, the Qur'an points to the fact that Allah has given the Prophet of Islam (S) enough evidence and sufficient Signs all of which are so clear that nobody can deny them. Hence, those who deny them, indeed, have recognized the rightfulness of his invitation, but, because of their special evil intentions, they oppose it.

***Verily, We have sent down to you clear Signs, and none denies them except the transgressors.* (*2:99*)**

Contemplation over the verses of the Qur'an makes the way clear for any pure-hearted truth-seeker. By

reciting these verses, the reality and truthfulness of the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S), as well as the greatness of the Qur'an, can be understood. But only those can understand this meaning that their hearts have not been darkened as a result of committing sin. Thus, it is not surprising that transgressors and those who have stained themselves with sins by disobeying the commands of Allah, never believe in Islam.

What! Whenever they made a covenant, a group of them cast it aside? Nay, most of them do not (truly) believe. (2:100)

With reference to the previous verses, this verse is also a protest against the Jews as to why some of these people neglect and breach their covenant that they make with Allah. They not only break their covenant but also have no faith at all. It may refer to this idea that if they believed in Allah and His Prophets ('a), they would never break their covenant or never fail in their promise.

And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, ... (2:101)

The purpose of the term 'Messenger', here, may be the Last Prophet (S), or it may refer to all those prophets ('a) who came after Moses ('a), because, according to the previous verses, the Qur'an protests against the Jews for rejecting all of the great prophets after Moses ('a). These prophets ('a), with their Divine commissions, abrogated Moses' religion whereas, in the meantime, they confirmed the rightfulness of what the Jews had in their hands – the Torah – yet, some of them (the Jews) put the Book *of* Allah behind their backs:

'...a part of them who were given the Book cast the Book of Allah behind their backs...' (2:101).

Some of the learned men of the Jews put the Book of Allah, the Torah, which attested to the prophethood of the Last Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S), ***'behind their backs'*** and, by neglecting his specific description which was recorded in the Torah, they abandoned it totally:

'...as though they knew (it) not!' (2:101).

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 168.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 11 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 102 – 105

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 102-103

وَاتَّبَعُواْ مَا تَتْلُواْ الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَى مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَـكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولاَ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلاَ تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُم بِضَآرِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلاَ يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُواْ لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلاَقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْاْ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And they followed what the Shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Solomon; and Solomon disbelieved not, but the Shaitans disbelieved by teaching people sorcery; and that which was sent down to the two angels, Harut and Marut, in Babylon. Even though they (the two) never taught anyone without saying: 'We are only a trial for you, therefore do not disbelieve'. So they learned from these two (magic spells) by which they might cause separation between a man and his wife, though they cannot hurt anyone (thereby) but by Allah's leave. They learn what harms them and profits them not; and they surely knew that the buyers of it would have no share of happiness in the Hereafter. And vile was the price for which they sold their own selves, had they but known (this)! (2:102)

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُواْ واتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ

Yet, had they believed (in Allah) and guarded themselves (against evil) a reward from Allah would have been better, had they but known (this)! (2:103)

Commentary

Solomon ('A) and the Sorcerers in Babylon

It is understood from the Islamic literature that, at the time of Solomon ('a), some of his fellow countrymen used to practice the art of sorcery. Solomon ('a) ordered that their records and related materials be gathered and kept locked in a safe place. (Their preservation was, perhaps, for the purpose that there may have been some pieces of paper among them helpful for breaking the spells of the sorcerers' magic.)

After the departure of Solomon ('a), a group of people took them out and began spreading and teaching

others sorcery. Some, taking advantage of this opportunity, said that Solomon (‘a) was not a prophet at all, and the wonderful power that he had over the realms of nature was through witchcraft; so it was with the help of those magic tricks that he could dominate his country and do extraordinary things.

By following this group, some of the Israelites were severely engaged in the art of sorcery; so intensively that they put the Torah aside.

When the Prophet of Islam (S) announced his invitation and, through the verses of the Qur’an, proclaimed that Solomon (‘a) had been one of the apostles of Allah, some of the Jewish rabbis told their people: ‘Are you not surprised that Muhammad says Solomon was an apostle while he was a sorcerer?’

This statement by those Jews was counted a great accusation against this Divine prophet (S), because when they said he was a sorcerer it insinuated that he was a liar and not a true prophet. This action caused him to be considered a blasphemer. Then, the above verse responded to their false accusation.

However, the first verse of this group of verses illustrates another dimension of the heinous actions of the Jews: that they accused the apostle of Allah, Solomon (‘a), of sorcery and witchcraft. It says:

And they followed what the Shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Solomon… (***2:102***)

The pronoun ‘they’, existing in the Arabic word /wattaba’u/, ‘they followed’, may refer to the Jews contemporary with the Prophet of Islam (S) or those contemporary with Solomon (‘a) or all of them.

The objective meaning of the term /shayatin/ may be the evil people, or devils of the Jinn, or both of them.

Then, after stating the above idea, the Qur’an adds:

…and Solomon disbelieved not… (***2:102***)

Solomon (‘a) never did practice sorcery, and he did not take any advantage from it in attaining his goals:

…but the Shaitans disbelieved by teaching people sorcery; and that which was sent down to the two angels, Harut and Marut, in Babylon…. (***2:102***)

Yes, they stretched their hands toward sorcery from two sides: one, from the side of sorcery which was taught by the Shaitans during the time of Solomon (‘a); and the other side was the instructions that Harut and Marut taught people for the purpose of breaking the spells of sorcery.

…Even though they (***the two***) ***never taught anyone without saying: ‘We are only a trial for you, therefore do not disbelieve’….*** (***2:102***)

In short, when these two angels appeared in the society, sorcery was in fashion among those people and a popular item in their marketplace. At that time, most of the people were captured in the grips of

sorcerers. The two angels taught people the ways in which they could counter the effects of such wicked practices (the witchcraft) of the sorcerers as an art of self-defence. But learning this art demanded, firstly, that they learn about the magic itself. So, in order to be able to negate sorcery, they initially had to learn sorcery itself, and the ways in which it might work effectively, as good skilful magicians.

But Jewish mischief mongers took this matter as a means for spreading sorcery more and more. They expanded it so vastly that they accused the Divine prophet, Solomon (‘a), of sorcery and said that if nature, or even Jinns and humans, obeyed him (‘a), it was merely the effect of sorcery. Yes, this is the common habit of the vicious: to accuse the great men as being their followers to justify their own school of thought.

At any rate, they could not pass this Divine trial successfully and, consequently, failed in keeping the right path, the true Faith.

***…So they learned from these two** (**magic spells**) **by which they might cause separation between a man and his wife…** (**2:102**)*

But the Power of Allah is above all these abilities.

***…though they cannot hurt anyone** (**thereby**) **but by Allah’s leave. They learn what harms them and profits them not; …** (**2:102**)*

Yes, they altered this divine constructive training. Instead of utilizing it on the path of improving their society and using it as a means of defense against the witchcraft of the sorcerers, they applied it to doing evil.

***…and they surely knew that the buyers of it would have no share of happiness in the Hereafter. And vile was the price for which they sold their own selves, had they but known** (**this**)**!** (**2:102**)*

They were heedless of their own happiness and of that of the society they belonged to, and were drowned in the whirlpool of blasphemy.

***Yet, had they believed** (**in Allah**) **and guarded themselves** (**against evil**) **a reward from Allah would have been better, had they but known** (**this**)**!** (**2:103**)*

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 104-105

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَقُولُواْ رَاعِنَا وَقُولُواْ انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُواْ وَلِلكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

***O’ you who have Faith! Do not say** (**to the Prophet**), **‘ra’ina’, but say ‘unzurna’; and hearken** (**unto him**) **and for unbelievers awaits a painful punishment.** (**2:104**)*

مَّا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلاَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَن يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَاللّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاء وَاللّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

Neither those who reject Faith from among the people of the* (*earlier*) *Book, nor those who take partners to Allah, wish that any good should be sent down upon you from your Lord, and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His Mercy and Allah is the Lord of Mighty Grace. (***2:105***)

Occasion of Revelation

Ibn Abbas, the leading commentator, is narrated to have said that the early Muslims, when the Prophet (S) was speaking and teaching them the divine verses and commandments, often asked him to speak slowly so that they could comprehend the material well and could have opportunity enough to ask their questions. For this purpose, then, they applied the phrase /ra'ina/ derived from the root /ar-ra'a/ 'to give respite', which means: ***'give us respite, wait for us'***[1] But the Jews took the same word from the Arabic root /ar-ra'unah/ used with the meaning of ***'foolhardiness, thoughtlessness, foolishness',*** which means: ***'make foolish of us'*** and suggests an insult.[2]

Here, the Jews had found something by which they could ridicule and make fun of the Prophet (S) and the Muslims. The first verse of the above verses was revealed to prevent this derisive usage of the word by the Jews. It commanded the believers to use /unzurna/ instead of /ra'ina/ which had the same meaning but was plain and unambiguous. Thus, the enemies could not misuse it.

Some other commentators have said that the phrase / ra'ina / was employed by some Jews in whose language it had an uncomplimentary meaning. They repeated it again and again.

Some others of the commentators have also said that the Jews pronounced / ra'ina / instead of saying / ra'ina / and, addressing the Prophet (S) with that term which meant ***'our cattle-tender, shepherd',*** ridiculed him.

These occasions of revelation do not contrast with each other, so that all of them may be right.

Commentary

Leave No Pretext for Enemies!

Regarding what was said about the occasion of revelation, the first verse of the verses under discussion says:

O' you who have Faith! Do not say* (*to the Prophet*), *'ra'ina', but say 'unzurna'; and hearken* (*unto him*) *and for unbelievers awaits a painful punishment. (***2:104***)

It is well understood from this verse that the Muslims, should be careful to avoid giving their enemies any

pretext, because they may misuse even one short sentence against them. The Qur'an advises the Muslims to avoid uttering even the smallest common word, which they might transform into a term of reproach in order to weaken the spirits of the Muslims. They should be careful not to select words which have multiple or ambiguous meanings that may be misused by the enemies to mock them thereby but rather should choose appropriate, unambiguous words. They must guard themselves against the cynical trick of using words which sound complimentary to the ear but have a hidden barb in them.

When Islam is so meticulous that it does not let Muslims give their enemies pretext for these little things, the duty of Muslims is clear for greater and more important subjects, both concerning their interior affairs and international matters.

It is also noteworthy that the phrase /ra'ina/, besides what was stated before, is not free from impoliteness in meaning, because this term may also be derived from the word /mura'at/ which mean that ***'you should observe us and we will observe you likewise'.*** Then, the Qur'an has bidden the Muslims not to use it anymore, since it contains a sense of impoliteness, besides the abusing of it by the Jews.

A Precise Meaning

The honorific and enlivening sentence /ya 'ayyuha alladhina 'amanu /, O' you who have Faith', addressed to the believers, has occurred 80 times in the Qur'an. The above verse is the first one which contains this phrase.

It is interesting that this phrase has occurred only in the verses that have been revealed in Medina, viz. it is not seen in the Meccan verses. It may be for the reason that with the emigration of the Prophet (S) to Medina, Muslims gathered together and it was then that the situation of Muslims became stabilized, especially when they formed a strong, powerful government. Hence, Allah (SWT) addressed them with this phrase:

O' you who have Faith! (***2: 104***)

This phrase conveys another meaning, too. It indicates that now that you have Faith and have submitted to the truth, i.e. you have taken a covenant with Allah; you should obey Him according to the commandments that have come along with it. In other words, your Faith necessitates that you follow these instructions accordingly.

It is also notable that in many references of Islamic literature, including the ones of the Sunnite, the Holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: *"No verse has Allah revealed with O' you who have Faith' save that 'Ali is at its top and is its chief."*[3]

In the next verse, the Qur'an pulls back the curtain on the enmity and grudge of the pagans and the People of the Book towards the believers. It says:

Neither those who reject Faith from among the people of the (earlier) Book, nor those who take partners to Allah, with that any good should be sent down upon you from your Lord... (2:105)

But this is not but a bare wish for them, because:

...and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His Mercy and Allah is the Lord of Mighty Grace. (2:105)

Because of their envy and enmity, the enemies of Islam did not want to be witnesses to this honour and glory given to Muslims, and they could not adapt to the fact that a great Prophet with a Divine Book from Allah could be appointed for them (Muslims), but, it was impossible for those hostile enemies to hinder the Mercy and Grace of Allah.

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1. al-Durr al-Manthur, Vol. 1, pp. 252-253.
2. Jami' al-Bayan, by Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari; Vol. 1, pp. 469-473.
3. Tafsir al-Furat al-kufi; p. 49, Tradition 7; and Tarikh al-Damishq, Ibn 'Asakir, Vol. 2, p. 428.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 12 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 106 - 113

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 106-107

مَا نَنسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللّهَ عَلَىَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Whatever We abrogate of a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring a better or the like of it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? (2:106)

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ

Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and that, besides Allah, you have neither guardian nor helper? (2:107)

Commentary

Purpose of Abrogation

The central meaning of these verses is again the Jewish evil propaganda against the Muslims.

The Jews occasionally said that the true religion was the religion of the Jews and the real Qiblah was the direction that they used for their prayers. The evidence supporting their idea was that the Prophet of Islam (S) used to pray toward their Qiblah (Jerusalem). But when the command for changing the Qiblah from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah came down and, according to verse 144 from this very Surah, Muslims had to pray toward the direction of Mecca (Ka'bah), this pretext was taken away from the Jews. Therefore, they tried to assert a new pretext and said that if the first Qiblah was right, then what was the second instruction for? And, if the second instruction was correct, then the Muslims' previous religious actions performed towards Jerusalem would be considered invalid.

The Qur'an replies to their objections through these verses and, thereby, enlightens the hearts of the believers. It says:

Whatever We abrogate of a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring a better or the like of it. (***2:106***)

And it is easy for Allah, of course:

...Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? (***2:106***)

Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and that, besides Allah, you have neither guardian nor helper? (***2:107***)

Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth... (***2:107***)

Allah has the right to change His ordinances in any form He pleases, and He is the most knowledgeable of all as to the welfare of His servants.

...and that, besides Allah, you have neither guardian nor helper? (***2:107***)

In fact, the first part of this verse denotes the absolute sovereignty of Allah in religious ordinances and that He is able to recognize and has the required knowledge to decide what is good for His creatures. Then, believers should not hearken to the vain words of some self-centred fellows who have doubt in the abrogation of the Divine Ordinances.

And the second part of the verse is a warning to those who choose refuge and support in other than Allah, because there is no real support in the world save Allah.

It should also be noted that the term /nasx/ 'abrogation' in philology means: 'to abolish, destroy', and

from the point of view of religion it means: 'to nullify a rule and substitute another in its place'. The detailed explanation about this subject will be discussed later.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 108

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَن تَسْأَلُواْ رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَى مِن قَبْلُ وَمَن يَتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ

Or do you desire to question your Messenger (Muhammad) as Moses was questioned aforetime? And he who exchanges Faith for infidelity, he has surely strayed from the right way. (***2:108***)

Occasion of Revelation

In the commentary books you may find some apparently different occasions of revelation for this verse, but their conclusions are nearly the same. A few of them are as follows:

One of the occasions of revelation upon the above verse has been narrated by Ibn Abbas. It is stated that once Wahab Ibn Zayd and Rafi' Ibn Harmalah came to the Holy Prophet (S) and asked him to bring a letter from Allah for them to read and then they might believe. Or, it happened that he (S) was asked to make some streams appear and flow for them so that they might follow him.

Some other commentators have said that a group of Arabs wanted from the Prophet of Islam (S) the same things that the Jews wanted from Moses ('a). They asked him to show the Lord clearly so that they could see Him with their own eyes and then they would believe.

As a response to them for their demand, the above verse was revealed.

Commentary

Some Futile Pretexts

The addressees, in this verse, are some Muslims whose Faith was feeble, or the pagans. The Jews are not mentioned directly in this verse but, as we will explain later, it is not far removed from the story of the Jews.

It was, perhaps, after the event of the change of the Qiblah that some of Muslims and pagans, affected by the temptations of the Jews, requested some vain and futile demands from the Holy Prophet (S), the examples of which were cited in the above. Allah, the Almighty, forbade them to ask such questions. The Qur'an says:

Or do you desire to question your Messenger (Muhammad) as Moses was questioned aforetime?... (***2:108***)

But you have decided, indeed, to evade believing by the acceptance of these vain pretexts.

In view of the fact that this action is a way of exchanging Faith for blasphemy, at the end of the verse it adds:

...And he who exchanges Faith for infidelity, he has surely strayed from the right way. (***2:108***)

It should be noted that Islam has never prevented people from asking scientific or logical questions, as well as asking the Prophet (S) to perform miracles in order to prove the Divine rightfulness of his prophecy, because the means of gaining understanding and Faith are the same. But there were some people who asked some futile questions and demanded some irrational pretexts in order to shirk the invitation of the Holy Prophet (S).

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 109-110

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُم مِّن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّاراً حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِندِ أَنفُسِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُواْ وَاصْفَحُواْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Many of the people of the (***earlier***) ***Book wish they could turn you back to be infidel, after you have believed, out of their own envy, even after the truth was manifest to them.*** (***Nevertheless***) ***forgive and overlook till Allah brings about His command, truly Allah has power over all things.*** (***2:109***)

وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُواْ لأَنفُسِكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ اللّهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates; whatever good you shall forward for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do. (***2:110***)

Commentary

Envy and Obstinacy

There were many members of the People of the Book, especially those of the Jews, who not only disbelieved in Islam but they also urged the believers to abandon their Faith. Their motive, for this action, was nothing but envy.

Through the above-mentioned verses, the Qur'an addresses this matter by saying:

Many of the people of the (***earlier***) ***Book wish they could turn you back to be infidel, after you have believed, out of their own envy, even after the truth was manifest to them....*** (***2:109***)

Here, the Qur'an bids the believers to forgive them their evil endeavours aiming at the destruction of Faith until Allah sends His command:

...(Nevertheless) forgive and overlook till Allah brings about His command, truly Allah has power over all things. **(2:109)**

This is, in fact, a tactical instruction given to Muslims that they should stand firm before the intense pressure of the enemies; and in this particular circumstance utilize the weapon of forgiveness while they focus their abilities upon constructing themselves and their Islamic society and wait for the command of Allah.

As a great many of the commentators have said, the purpose of 'the command of Allah' here, is 'the command for the Holy War' which at that time had not been revealed yet. The reason for the delay may have been that their conditions were not completely appropriate for that command. That was why, according to many of the commentators, the idea in this verse was changed by the subsequent verses regarding 'the Holy War', which will be referred to later.

The verse following the above one bids the believers to perform two great constructive commands. One of them is about 'prayer' which establishes a firm relationship between the servant and his Lord. The second is almsgiving, which is the secret of cohesiveness among the members of societies. These two are necessary for defeating enemies. It says:

And keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates... **(2:110)**

By these two deeds you may strengthen both your spirit and body. Then, it adds that you should not think that the good deeds you do and the material wealth you pay as poor-rates in the way of Allah will be lost totally. It is not so, but:

...whatever good you shall forward for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do. **(2:110)**

Thus, He definitely knows which deeds you have done for His sake and which ones for the sake of other than Him.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 111-112

وَقَالُواْ لَن يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلاَّ مَن كَانَ هُوداً أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُواْ بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And they said: 'None shall enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.' Such are their fancies. Say: 'Bring your proof, if you are truthful'. **(2:111)**

بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Yes! Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah, and he is a doer of good, his reward is with his Lord; no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve. (***2:112***)

Commentary

In the above verses, the Qur'an has referred to one of the other vain, inappropriate statements of a group of the Jews and the Christians, and then, it has responded to them with a knockdown answer. It is as thus:

And they said: 'None shall enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian'... (***2:111***)

In reply to them, at first, it says:

...Such are their fancies... (***2:111***)

and they will never reach such wishes. Then, addressing the Prophet (S) it says:

...Say: 'Bring your proof, if you are truthful'. (***2:111***)

Every claim needs its own proof for verification. When the fact became clear that they had not any proof for their claim and that their insistence that Paradise was exclusively theirs, which was merely a bare desire of theirs, the essential basic criterion for entering Paradise was given, as a general law in this verse, as it says:

Yes! Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah, and he is a doer of good, his reward is with his Lord... (***2:112***)

Therefore,

...no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve. (***2:112***)

In short, the fact is that entering Paradise, the reward of Allah, and attaining felicity and salvation in the coming eternal life is exclusive to no tribe or particular race, but these merits belong to the ones who have the following two attributes:

The first attribute is that the person should submit himself wholly to the commands of Allah and obey all of His commandments without considering any difference between this ordinance or that one. It should not be so that he accepts those commandments that are compatible with what he considers his benefit and puts aside those that are opposite to that which he desires. Yes, such ones are entirely submitted to Allah's Will.

The second attribute is that the effect of Faith is illustrated in their deeds in the form of good actions.

These people are good to all human beings in all of their affairs.

By this statement, in fact, the Qur'an, as a general rule, nullifies the inappropriate racial bigotries, and absolutely dismisses true salvation and happiness from the confinement of a special tribe. To sum it up, the verse distinguishes Faith and good deeds as criterion for true felicity.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 113

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَى عَلَىَ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُواْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

***The Jews said: 'The Christians rest on naught', and the Christians said: 'The Jews rest on naught'; yet they (both) recite the (same) Book. Even so, similar to their sayings, spoke those who know not. Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgement in what they differ.* (*2:113*)**

Occasion of Revelation

Some of the commentators have narrated from Ibn Abbas that when a group of Christians who were from Najran were attending a gathering of the Prophet's (S), some of the Jewish scholars were there, too. These two groups began disputing with each other before the Prophet (S). Rafi' Ibn Harmalah, one of the Jews, turned to the Christians and said that their religion was based on naught. Thus, he was rejecting the prophethood of Jesus ('a) and his Divine Book. Then, a man from among the Christians from Najran, too, replied to him with a similar expression and said that the religion of the Jews was based on naught. Thus, he also rejected both the prophethood of Moses ('a) and the Torah. It was at that time that the above verse was revealed and reproached both groups for their fabricated statements.[1]

Commentary

Exclusivity, The Fruit of Ignorance

In the previous verse, we became acquainted with a portion of the rootless claims of a group of the Jews and the Christians. The verse under discussion indicates that when a proof less claim comes forth, it results in exclusivity and then leads to contradiction.

***The Jews said: 'The Christians rest on naught and Christians said: 'The Jews rest on naught'...* (*2:113*).**

The phrase: 'rest on naught' may mean that they have no rank and honour with Allah; or their belief is not a thing worthwhile.

Then, to complete the above idea, it adds:

...yet they (***both***) ***recite the*** (***same***) ***Book...*** (***2:113***).

That is, with the Divine Book that they have in their hands which can guide them toward the right path concerning these problems, it is surprising that they say such words which originate from nowhere except prejudice and enmity.

Then the Qur'an continues saying:

...Even so, similar to their sayings, spoke those who know not. (***2:113***)

(Although these are the People of the Book and those are pagans or idolaters.)

This verse introduces ignorance as the origin of bigotry and prejudice, because ignorant people are always shut in their own worlds and do not accept other than that which they know. They seriously believe only in the Faith that they have been acquainted with from their early childhood, even if it is false or superstitious. Therefore, they put aside everything other than that which they believe.

At the end of the verse, it says:

...Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment in what they differ. (***2:113***)

It is in the Hereafter where the facts will be entirely evident and the proof and references of all things will become perfectly manifest. None will be able to deny what is right and, thus, there will remain no dispute. Yes, one of the special characteristics of the Resurrection Day is that all disagreements will come to an end.

By the way, the above verse reminds Muslims that although the followers of these religions have stood against them and rejected Islam, therefore, they need not be worried because the Jews and Christians do not verify even themselves. Each of them nullifies the other and, in principle, ignorance is the origin of bigotry and bigotry is the source of exclusivity.

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 188, and Tafsir Ghartabi and Tafsir Al-Manar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 13 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 114 – 115

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 114

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللّهِ أَن يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا أُوْلَـئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَن يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلاَّ خَآئِفِينَ لهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

***And who if more unjust than he who prevents the mosques of Allah of His Name being remembered therein and strives for their ruin? Such (people) might never enter them, save in fear. For them if disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a great punishment.* (*2:114*)**

Occasion of Revelation

It has been narrated from Ibn Abbas, cited in the book *'Asb-ab-un-Nuzul'*, that this verse was revealed about Fatlus-ur-Rumi, a Roman, and his friends. They fought against the Children of Israel and burnt the Torah. In that war, Jewish children were made captives, and Jerusalem was ruined and filled with corpses.[1]

The Late Tabarsi, a great commentator, narrates from Ibn Abbas, in his book '*Majma'ul-Bayan*' that this strives for the destruction of Jerusalem was continued until when that Holy Land was conquered by Muslims...[2]

A tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says that this verse was revealed about the Quraysh when they prevented the Holy Prophet (S) from entering Mecca and the Ka'bah.[3]

Also, a third occasion of revelation is cited for this verse. It says the verse is referring to the sites in Mecca where Muslims used to pray at, which pagans destroyed totally after the emigration of the Prophet (S) from that City.[4]

There is no discrepancy in saying that all three of these occasions of revelation refer to their own individual incidents. Therefore, each of them illustrates one of the dimensions of the subject.

Commentary

The Most Unjust Ones!

When dealing with the occasions of revelation of the above-mentioned verse, it is understood that the words are about all three groups: the Jews, the Christians and the pagans, while the words in the

previous verses were mostly about the Jews and sometimes about the Christians.

At any rate, the Jews, creating mischief about the Qiblah, tried to return the direction of the prayers of Muslims toward Jerusalem in order to appear to have, by that manner, a kind of superiority in the eyes of the community of Muslims and also weaken the lustre and elegance of the Sacred Mosque and the Ka'bah.[5]

The pagans of Mecca, having prevented the Holy Prophet (S) and Muslims from visiting and pilgrimaging to the Sacred House, the Ka'bah, practically stepped forth toward the desolation of this Holy Structure.

The Christians, too, having conquered Jerusalem and having performed actions which gave rise to what was said to be the occasion of revelation of this verse, as narrated by Ibn Abbas, tried to ruin it.

The Qur'an, warning these three groups and all others who pave a similar way, says:

And who is more unjust than he who prevents the mosques of Allah of His Name being remembered therein and strives for their ruin?... (***2:114***)

Thus, the Qur'an considers this prevention unjust and introduces contrivers of it as the most unjust people. Indeed, what greater 'unjust' could be committed than that they strive to ruin the Monotheistic centers and prevent people from remembering the Name of their Providence, whose consequence would be the spread of polytheism and corruption in the society!

Then, the verse continues saying:

...Such (***people***) ***might never enter them, save in fear....*** (***2:114***)

That is, Muslims and monotheists of the world should stand so firm against these transgressors that their hands be curtailed from these sacred sites so that none of them can freely and without fear enters therein.

In commenting on the above verse, a possible meaning is that these kind of unjust people with these kinds of actions will never truly is succeed in taking these Holy shrines and places of worship under their own control. The final circumstance will be such that they will not be able to enter them save in fear. They will be subject to just the same fate and fortune that the pagans of Mecca had regarding the Sacred Mosque.

Finally, through the concluding words of the verse and with a shocking statement, the Qur'an has referred to the penalty of those transgressors both in the present world and the coming world. It says:

...For them is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a great punishment. (***2:114***)

And this is the end of those who want to separate servants from their Providence.

Explanation: Mosques and the Ways of their Desolation

There is no doubt that the above verse has a vast meaning which is not confined to a particular time or place. The verse, from this point of view, is like other verses of the Qur'an which have been revealed in relation to a specific condition or circumstance referred to as the occasion of revelation, but their ordinances are valid in all ages. Therefore, anyone or any group who strive in any form to ruin the mosques of Allah or prevent the Name of Allah from being remembered and adored therein, will be faced with the same disgrace and great punishment which have been pointed out in this verse.

It is also necessary to pay attention to this fact that the prevention of worshippers from entering into the Sacred Mosque and the barring of the remembrance of the Name of Allah and His adoration along with striving for ruining it, does not only refer to the mosque being destroyed by shovel and pick, but involves any actions that cause mosques to be ruined or seem dull and lustreless.

As it will be explained when commenting on Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:18, the purpose of the Qur'anic phrase /ya'muru masajid /, mentioned in the verse, according to the clear meanings of some Islamic narrations and traditions, is not merely 'to build or to mend the mosques'. Attending these holy shrines and remembering the Name of Allah and adoring Him therein not only is a means of maintaining them but also is counted as their most important form of maintenance.

Therefore, in the opposite case, whatever causes people to neglect the remembrance of the Name of Allah and keeps them apart from the mosques, is a very grand injustice.

Supplication

O' Lord! Guard us from, and against, any deviation and corruption!

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 115

وَلِلّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّواْ فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And to Allah belong the East and the West, wherever you turn, there is the Presence of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (***2:115***)

Occasion of Revelation

There are different narrations cited on the cause of the occasion of revelation of this verse.

Ibn Abbas says that this verse concerns the change of the Qiblah. When Muslims' Qiblah was changed from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah, the Jews tried to reject it by objecting to the Muslims and demanding of them how the Qiblah could, be changed. This verse was revealed and replied to their objection that the

East and the West of the world belong to Allah.[6]

Another tradition indicates that this verse has been revealed regarding 'the recommended prayers'. It refers to this meaning that one can pray his supererogatory prayers in any direction that his mount moves towards, even if he is facing opposite to the Qiblah.[7]

Some others have narrated from Jabir who said that the Prophet (S) once sent some of the Muslims to fight in a war. When the dark of night fell and they wanted to pray their night prayer they could not confirm the correct direction of the Qiblah. Then, everyone used an approximate direction towards the Qiblah and offered his prayers. At the break of dawn, they found out that they had prayed towards a direction other than the Qiblah. They informed the Holy Prophet (S) about it and the above verse was revealed declaring that their prayers were all correct in such a condition.[8]

(This religious creed, of course, has some conditions that should be studied in jurisprudent books.)

It is realistic that all of the above occasions of revelation are correct for this verse. That is, the verse refers to the idea of the change of the Qiblah as well as reciting the supererogatory prayer when riding on a mount, and the obligatory prayers performed when the correct direction of the Qiblah is not recognizable. Besides, no verse, in principle, is allocated exclusively to its occasion of revelation, but its content should be considered as a general ordinance; and, sometimes, what a great number of different ordinances can be derived from it.

Commentary

Allah, the Omnipresent

The previous verse was about the oppressors who prevented worship in the mosques of Allah and strived for the destruction of them. The verse under discussion is a continuation of the same idea. It says:

And to Allah belong the East and the West, wherever you turn, there is the Presence of Allah... (***2:115***)

It is not such that if they prevent you from entering the mosques of Allah and attending the monotheistic centers, the path of adoring Allah would be entirely closed to you. The East and the West of the world belong to Him. Whithersoever you turn, He is there. Also, the change of the Qiblah, which was ordained because of some particular circumstances, has not the least effect on our worship. Can any place be found where Allah is not there. In principle, Allah has no limited place. (A further explanation can be studied on page 322).

That is why at the end of the verse, it says:

...Surely Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (***2:115***)

The point noteworthy here is that the East and the West mentioned in the verse should not be taken as confined to the directions where the sun rises or sets, as they are only relative expressions. The emphasis on the East and the West may be because the first directions that man is able to recognize are these two directions, and the other directions can be figured out by determining them.

The Qur'an, concerning these directions, also says:

***And We made a people, considered weak* (*and of no account*)*, inheritors in both East and West* (*7:137*).**

Philosophy of the Qiblah

The first question that arises here is that if

***'wherever we turn, there is the Presence of Allah'* (*2:115*),**

then why is it necessary that we observe the direction of the Qiblah?

As we will explain later, observing the Qiblah does not mean to confine the Presence of Allah to a particular direction. Since man is a creature dependent on material and concrete thought, he should pray towards whatever direction the commandment has mandated. All should pray towards a single direction in order to unite all Muslims in single rows, and to avoid dispersion and disorder.

Imagine how disgraceful it would be if every individual prayed toward a separate direction or in dispersive rows.

By the way, the direction which is appointed as the Qiblah (the direction towards the Ka'bah) is a holy place and it is the most ancient sacred site of monotheism whose consideration evokes monotheistic remembrance.

The phrase /wajhullah/ does not mean 'the face of Allah', as some have rendered, but it means, here, 'the Unity or Presence of Allah'.

As it was stated before, in the occasion of revelation, and many Islamic narrations attest to, this verse has been taken as the basic reference to certify the validity of the prayers offered by those who would pray toward a direction other than the direction of the Ka'bah by mistake or because of lack of the capability of verification. This very verse is also referred to for the validity of reciting prayers when riding on a moving mount. (For more details concerning this subject, refer to the jurisprudential books '*Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*', *'Kitab al-Salat'* and *'Abwab al-Qiblah'*.)

Here, we attract your attention to three authentic traditions about the term / wajhu Allah / and its meaning:

1. It is cited in the book *'Al-Tawhid'* from Salman Farsi, through a tradition known as Jathliq, who asked

Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) some questions which were comprehensively replied to. One of them was that he asked him ('a) which direction his Lord's presence was. Hadrat 'Ali ('a) told Ibn Abbas to have some firewood fetched for him. The firewood was brought and was kindled. When the fire was flaming, Hadrat 'Ali ('a) asked the man which direction the face of the fire was, and the Christian answered that its face was on every side. 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) said: *"This fire which is a material is not recognized by its face, then Allah, its Creator, is not like that. To Allah belong the East and the West, wherever you turn, there is the Presence of Allah.'..."*[9]

2. Again, keeping in mind that the commands given by the Holy Messenger (S) are those that he has received from Allah, it is narrated from Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) who said that the manifestation of Allah (SWT) is Ahl al-Bayt ('a) who are the guides and Imams for people whose obedience to them has been enjoined by Him the same as it has been enjoined to Him and His Messenger (S). That is, the only way to the cognizance of /wajhullah/ 'the Presence of Allah' and the Divine Majesty is through Ahl al-Bayt ('a), who are His witnesses.[10] That is, haply, why they (Imams) have said: *"It is through us that people know* Allah*, and through us* (*with our guidance*) *they worship Allah."*[11]

3. Tariq Ibn Shahab has narrated in a tradition from Hadrat Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) who said: *"O Tariq! Imam is the Word of Allah, the Proof of Allah, the Presence of Allah, the Light of Allah..."*[12]

There are some other expressive narrations on the subject cited in *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 93, p. 228, which can be referred to, too.

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1. Asbab-un-Nuzul, p. 22, Arabic version.
2. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 189.
3. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 189.
4. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 189 and Al-Mizan, the of the verse.
5. Tafsir Fakhr al-Razi, Vol. 4, p. 9.
6. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 191.
7. Minhaj as-Sadiqin, Vol. 1, p. 348, and Abd al-Futuh Razi; Vol. 1, p. 302.
8. Tafsir al-Tibyan, Vol. 1, p. 424 and Tafsir Nemuneh, Vol. 1, p. 413.
9. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 25, p. 168 .
10. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 93, p. 118, and al-Ihtijaj by Tabarsi.
11. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 23, p. 102, Tradition 1.
12. Bihar al-Anwar Vol. 25, p. 168.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 14 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 116 – 123

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 116-117

وَقَالُواْ اتَّخَذَ اللّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَل لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

They said: 'Allah has taken to Himself a son'. Glory be to Him! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth: all are obedient to Him. (***2:116***)

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَى أَمْراً فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ

Originator (***is He***) ***of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a matter to be, He only says to it 'Be' and it is.*** (***2:117***)

Commentary

The Jews, Christians, and Pagans and their Superstitions

The superstitious belief that Allah has got a child is accepted by the Christians, a group of the Jews, and some pagans. All of them believe that He has chosen a child for Himself.

Surah At-Tawbah, says:

The Jews call 'Uzair (***Ezra***) ***a son of Allah and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth;*** (***in this***) ***they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!*** (***9:30***)

Also, about the pagans, Surah Yunus, says:

They say: 'Allah has begotten a son!' – Glory be to Him! He is Self-Sufficient!… (***10:68***)

There are many other verses in the Holy Qur'an that refer to this inappropriate idea of theirs.

To condemn this superstition, the first verse of the verses under discussion says:

They said: 'Allah has taken to Himself a son'. Glory be to Him!… (***2:116***)

Why would Allah need to take a son for Himself! Is He in need of one? Is He limited? Does He need to

be helped? Or, is it necessary for Him to have any descendants?

...Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth all are obedient to Him. (***2:116***)

He is not only the Possessor of all things and creatures in the world of existence, but also,

Originator (***is He***) ***of the heavens and the earth...*** (***2:117***)

And He has created all of them without any previous design, preparation, or without being in need of any pre-existing material.

What necessity is He forced by to have a child while everything is immediately ready for Him?

...and when He decrees a matter to be, He only says to it 'Be' and it is. (***2:117***)

Explanation

Besides the above verse, the phrase /kun fa-yakun/ ***'Be! and it is'*** has occurred in several verses of the Qur'an, including the followings:

1. Surah 'Aali 'Imran, 3:47;

2. Surah 'Aali 'Imran, 3:59;

3. Surah Al-An'am, 6:73;

4. Surah An-Nahl, 16:40;

5. Surah Maryam, 19:35;

6. Surah Yasin, 36:82;

7. Surah Ghafir, 40:68.

This phrase is about the Will of Allah and His Absolute Sovereignty on the subject of creation.

To understand this well, we should know the meaning of the Unity of Acts and the creation of all created beings by Allah*'s* Will. Precisely; Unity of Acts, in terms of His acts, does not need any help or helper from outside Himself. Should He use any means for that purpose, the means itself is created by Him and used by Him. It is not that He needs some help from outside Himself which is not connected to Him, and to be brought from somewhere else, or if so Allah would not be able to do whatever He wants to. No, it is not like that at all. Allah's Acts need none but Himself and His Will alone.

The explanation is that the objective meaning of the phrase /kun fa-yakun/ (***Be! and it is***) is not that Allah issues a verbal command with the word 'Be', but the reality is that when He wills something to exist

it exists. There will be no time between that Will and its existence, not even a moment.

In other words, the phrase /kun fa-yakun/ (***Be! and it is***) is only to bring home to the human mind the Omnipotent Will which, properly speaking, can never be translated into any verbal expression. Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a), of whom the Holy Prophet (S) had declared: '*I* (i.e. the Holy Prophet himself) *am the City of knowledge and 'Ali is its Gate',* in referring to the phrase mentioned in this verse; - regarding the Divine Omnipotence and the execution of His Will says:

"Not by sound uttered, nor by voice heard, His Word, blessed be He, is Action proceeding from Him". 1

There is a similar idea in a tradition from Hadrat Musa Ibn Ja'far, the seventh Imam ('a), cited in *Al-Kafi* as well as in *Tawhid as-Saduq*.2

This meaning, with a slightly different explanation, is also mentioned in *Tafsir-Burhan*, Vol. 1, p. 146.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 118-119

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلاَ يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

And the ignorant said: 'Why does Allah not speak to us, or a Sign comes not to us?' Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed, We have made clear the Signs to people who are sure. (***2:118***)

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلاَ تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ

Verily, We have sent you (***O' Muhammad***) ***with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner and you shall not be questioned about the inhabitants of the Blazing Fire.*** (***2:119***)

Commentary

Another Pretext

Similar to the pretexts of the Jews, in the initial verses of the above group of verses, another party of pretext-seekers are referred to, whom, apparently, were the Arab pagans. It says:

And the ignorant said: 'Why does Allah not speak to us, or a Sign comes not to us?'... (***2:118***)

This group of unbelieving people, whom the Qur'an has referred, to as /alladhina la ya'lamuna/ 'the ignorant' had, indeed, two illogical demands:

1. Why does Allah not speak to them?

2. Why does a sign not come to them?

In answer to these selfish demands, the Qur'an says:

...Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made clear the Signs to people who are sure. (***2:118***)

If they truly intend to understand the Truth, these very verses revealed to the Prophet (S) are clear Signs to the rightfulness of his Call. Why should some verses be independently and directly revealed to each individual separately? And what does it mean that a person insists that Allah must speak to him, himself, directly?

A similar idea to this is also stated in Surah Al-Muddaththir, thus:

For sure, each one of them wants to be given scrolls (***of revelation***) ***spread out!*** (***74:52***)

This manner, in principle, besides that it is not necessary, contrasts with Divine Wisdom, because firstly, the rightfulness of the prophethood of prophets has been proved to all peoples by way of the verses which were revealed to them themselves. Secondly, it is not possible for verses and miracles to be revealed to every individual, for this need a special kind of eligibility, preparation, and purity of soul. It closely resembles to a situation in which all the wires of the vast electrical system of a city (the strong thick wires and the very thin ones) be expected to receive the same extraordinarily high amount of electricity that immediately arrives into the initial thick wires directly from the main generator. This expectation is certainly a vain, incorrect expectation. The engineer who has arranged these various wires for different purposes has calculated the capability of each wire. Some of them convey the electricity directly and immediately from the generator, while some others do it by means of some intermediary wires and with a variety of voltages.

The next verse addresses the Holy Prophet (S) and defines his duty regarding their demands for miracles and other pretexts. It says:

Verily, We have sent you (***O' Muhammad***) ***with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner...*** (***2:119***)

That is, O' Muhammad (S) your responsibility is that you proclaim our commandments to all people, to illustrate the miracles, and to express the facts logically and with clear statements. This action should coincide with persuading the good doers and warning the evil doers. This is your duty.

...and you shall not be questioned about the inhabitants of the Blazing Fire. (***2:119***)

Explanation: Their Hearts are All Alike!

In the above verses we learnt that the Qur'an declares:

Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. (***2:118***)

This idea points to the fact that the passing of time and the instructions of prophets (S) should have had such an effect that the later generations could gain a larger portion of knowledge so that they would put aside vain statements which are a sign of ignorance. But unfortunately, this group of people usually has no share in the process of development. They are always retrogressive so that it seems as if they belonged to thousands of years ago, and the passing of time has not affected the least change in their minds.

Two Instructive Principles

'Glad tidings' and 'warning' or 'encouragement' and 'threat', form a great part of the motives of educational and social affairs. A person should be both encouraged for his good deeds and punished for his wrong actions, in order to be prepared for paving the first path and avoiding the second route.

Mere encouragement is not enough for the attainment of improvement in an individual or a society, because in this condition the individual is sure that committing sin does not harm him.

The present followers of Christ ('a), for example, believe in 'ransom'. They think that Jesus ('a) has been sacrificed for their sins. Even their clergymen sometimes promise them Heaven, and forgiveness for their sins on behalf of the Lord. It is evident that such a group of people may easily commit sins.

In a Guide to Christian Workers of the New American Standard Version Bible (pg. 1295), it is cited about Christ ('a):

"He tasted death for me; thus He bore the supreme penalty of my sins."

Surely this incorrect idea makes its followers bold in committing wrongs and corruption.

In short, those who think mere encouragement is enough in training men (irrespective of children or adults) and threats, punishment and revenge have no place and should be completely put aside, are completely wrong. On the other hand, those who, neglecting the encouraging aspect, think that training is based only on threats and terror are on a wrong path as well.

These two groups have a mistaken conception of Man, because they do not have this fact in mind: that Man is made up of a combination of hope and fear, love of living and hatred of destruction. His nature is to attract gain and to repel loss.

Observing the parallel between these two principles is particularly essential since if encouragement and hope goes beyond limits, it results in boldness and negligence. And when threats and punishment is

abundant, it produces despair and extinguishes the flames of love and vitality.

For the exact same reason, in the verses of the Qur'an, the terms 'glad tidings' and 'warning' have occurred in conjunction with each other. It has happened that the term 'glad tidings' has sometimes preceded the term 'warning', like in the verse under discussion; and sometimes it is vice versa, as in Surah Al-A'raf, which says:

...I am a warner and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have Faith. (***7:188***)

In fact, in the majority of these verses of the Qur'an, 'glad tidings' has preceded 'warning'. This may be because, in general, the Mercy and Grace of Allah have preceded His Wrath and punishment, as we call Him in supplications: *"O' He Whose Mercy precedes His Wrath."*

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 120-121

وَلَن تَرْضَى عَنكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلاَ النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءهُم بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ

For, never, will the Jews be pleased with you nor the Christians unless you follow their religion. Say: 'Behold Allah's guidance is the only (***true***) ***guidance.' And verily if you follow their desires after the knowledge has come to you, you shall have from Allah neither protector nor helper.*** (***2:120***)

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلاَوَتِهِ أُوْلَـئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read, they are the ones that truly believe in it, and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall (***surely***) ***be the losers.*** (***2:121***)

Occasion of Revelation

On the occasion of revelation of the first of the above verses, it is narrated from Ibn Abbas that the Jews in Medina and the Christians from Najran expected that the Prophet of Islam (S) would traditionally accept the same Qiblah as they had. When Allah altered the Qiblah from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah, they became disheartened with the Prophet of Islam (S). (Perhaps, some of the Muslim believers, too, criticized that they should not do anything that would offend the Jews and the Christians).

The above verse was revealed and informed the Prophet (S) that that group of Jews and Christians would be satisfied with him neither by coming into agreement upon the Qiblah nor by anything else except that he would follow their creeds.[3] Some others have narrated that the Prophet (S) insisted very much on convincing them to accept Islam. The above verse was revealed telling him (S) to disregard

that idea because never would they be pleased with him unless he followed their religion.[4]

There are also various narrations upon the occasion of revelation of the second of the above verses. Some of the commentators believe that this verse was revealed about those people who came with Ja'far ibn Abi Talib from Abyssinia to Medina. They had joined Islam and accompanied him when he left there. They were 40 men, thirty-two of whom were from Abyssinia and eight men were from the monks of Syria among whom there was a famous Christian monk by the name of Bahira.[5]

Some other commentators believe that the verse was revealed about some people from among the Jews such as Abdillah Ibn Salam, Shu'bat Ibn 'Amru, Tamam Ibn Yahuda, and so on who accepted the invitation of Prophet Muhammad (S) and became true believers.[6]

Commentary

Two Unsatisfiable Groups!

The previous verse relieves Hadrat Muhammad (S) of any responsibility concerning those stubborn misguided people. Now, this verse, elaborating on the same idea, informs the Prophet (S) of the reason why it is so:

For, never will the Jews be pleased with you nor the Christians unless you follow their religion. Say: 'Behold Allah's guidance is the only (true) guidance.'... **(*2:120*)**

Allah's guidance is a guidance which is not adulterated with superstitions and wrong thoughts of ignorant people. Yes, such pure noble guidance should be followed.

Then, it adds:

...And verily if you follow their desires after the knowledge has come to you, you shall have from Allah neither protector nor helper. **(*2:120*)**

But, since some of the Jewish and Christian truth-seekers accepted the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S) and embraced Islam, the Holy Qur'an, after scorning the aforementioned group, commemorates this group well by saying:

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read, they are the ones that truly believe in it. And whoever disbelieves in it, they shall (surely) be the losers. **(*2:121*)**

These people were those who truly read their Divine Book as it ought to be read and followed it accordingly. This manner of striving resulted in their being guided. Therein, they had studied the glad tidings of the advent of the promised prophet and they found those attributes congruous with Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (S) so thereby they submitted, and Allah, therefore, appreciated them.

Explanation

The phrase / wa la ’initaba’ta ‘ahwa’ahum /, ‘and verily if you follow their desires’, may prompt the readers of the verse to ask this question: Was it possible that Muhammad (S) would, with his inerrant position of prophethood, follow the desires of those misguided Jews?

In answer to this question, we say that these statements, which are frequently cited in the verses of the Qur’an, do not contradict with the state of inerrancy of prophets (‘a), because on one hand, it is a conditional sentence, therefore the mentioning of the protasis does not lean that the action will definitely be performed.

On the other hand, the state of being immune from sin does not refute the capability of committing sin and errs by prophets (‘a) though prophets and Imams (‘a) are able to commit sin and their free will is not taken away from them, they would never contaminate themselves with corruption or even taint their souls with a single sin. In other words, they can commit sins but their belief, knowledge, and virtue is so intense that they never draw near to any sin. Therefore, such admonishments as the above are completely appropriate for them.

Thirdly, this statement, although addressing the Holy Prophet (S), may envelop all believers entirely.

Pleasing Enemies has its Limits

It is true that one should attract the enemies’ attention towards his invitation with the magnetic power of excellent ethics and superior character, but there are some who never accept the truth. They are not worth worrying about. They will never believe in the true path, hence, endeavouring to attract their attention is a waste of time.

Allah’s Guidance is the Only True Guidance

This fact is also understood from the above verses that the only law which can lead man towards salvation and happiness is the law and guidance of Allah, because to whatever extent the knowledge of man progresses, it is still interwoven with ignorance, doubt and deficiency from the points of view of various aspects. Hence, the guidance which comes forth under the shade of such incomplete knowledge cannot be considered an absolute guidance. The only One Who can provide Absolute Guidance is the One Who possesses ‘Absolute Knowledge’, without any ignorance or imperfection. This Attribute applies only to Allah.

How Should the Book be Read?

This meaning is an expressive one which defines a clear path for us regarding the Holy Qur’an, the Divine Book. Now, those who read the verses of the Qur’an are defined in several groups:

One of these groups emphasize on the forms of pronunciation and articulation of the phonemes and

morphemes and also the overall intonation of the verses of the Qur'an with their own proper Arabic points of articulation. They always think of linguistical regulations for the Arabic pronunciation of the signs and sounds, pauses and extensions, and, finally, for observing the special letters in the Qur'an known as /yarmalun/. They usually are not particularly concerned with the meaning and the content of the verses they read. When they disregard the meaning of the Qur'an, their actions accordingly are obvious. The example of this kind of people is depicted in the Qur'an saying:

...is as the likeness of the ass bearing books... (***62:5***).

The second group is those who, in addition to the verbal utterances, pay close attention to the meanings of the verses and contemplate over the elegancies and exquisite points of the Qur'an.

They try to understand the sciences described therein, but they do not actually comply with its ordinances.

The third group is those true believers who accept the Qur'an as a mandate of action and use it as a comprehensive program for their lives. They consider the recitation of this great Book, contemplation over its meanings, and conception of its purposes as preliminary for their actions. That is why whenever they recite the Qur'an, a fresh and pleasing state encompasses their souls allowing them to make new decisions with vigorous intention and a strong inner feeling of preparedness for their actions. This is, perhaps, the privilege granted for reading the Book in the way in which it ought to be read.

A tradition from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a), commenting on this verse, says: “They recite its verses slowly, and understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promises, and are afraid of its threats, and take lessons from its stories, and obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths. They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. Allah, the High, has said:

(***It is***) ***a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses'...*** (***38:29***).[7]

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 122-123

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

O' Children of Israel! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel all the nations (***of that time***). (***2:122***).

وَاتَّقُواْ يَوْماً لاَّ تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلاَ تَنفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another, neither shall any ransom be accepted from any one, nor shall intercession profit any one, nor shall they be helped (***from outside***). (***2:123***).

Commentary

Once again, in these verses, Allah addresses the Children of Israel and reminds them of His favours bestowed on them; particularly that He preferred them to all other nations of their time.

O' Children of Israel! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel all the nations (***of that time***). (***2:122***).

But, since every blessing is followed by a corresponding responsibility and, therefore, Allah gives man a duty or a responsibility to undertake for each bounty which is given him, in the next verse He threatens him by saying:

And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another, neither shall any ransom be accepted from anyone, nor shall intercession profit any one... (***2:123***).

And, if you think that anyone can help others that day, save Allah, you are mistaken, because He says:

...nor shall they be helped (***from outside***). (***2:123***).

Therefore, none of the means of rescue that they would grope for in this world to save themselves will be available there. There will be only one way open to them which *is the path of Faith, good action, repentance of sins, and self-improvement.*

These two verses are quite similar to verses 47 and 48 of the current Surah, where we explained the idea of intercession in detail. Here, it is referred to, again, reminding that the warning, i.e. that 'intercession shall not be of any avail', does not at all mean that the intercession by the Holy Prophet (S) or any other of his divine allies will also be ineffective on the Day of Judgment. It is a warning against the disbelievers who, as a figment of their own fanciful imaginations, think that their guardian deities, gods or goddesses will come to their aid, or to those of the Jews and Christians who stubbornly claim the intercession of Moses ('a), or that Christ's ('a) blood has been paid as a ransom for the sins of his followers. This verse clearly denies any such ransom for sins or intercession for the sinners who do not believe in the divinely promised Last Apostle of Allah, Muhammad al-Mustafa (S), and reject faith in the truth which he preached. But, as it was mentioned before, the intercession of the Holy Prophet (S) or the other holy ones ('a) will be accepted by the leave of Allah (SWT).

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1. Nahj al-Balagha, Arabic version by Subhi as-Salih, p. 274.
2. Tafsir as-Safi, Vol. 1, p. 167.
3. Abd al-Futuh Razi, Vol. 1, p. 308.

4. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol., p. 197.
5. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 198.
6. Majma' al-Bayan and Tafsir Abd al-Futuh Razi, Vol. 1, p. 310.
7. Irshad al-Qulub, ad-Daylami, in Al-Mizan, Vol. 2, p. 70 (English Version).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 15 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 124 - 132

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 124

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لاَ يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

***And** (**remember**) **when his Lord tested Abraham with words** (**of command**) **which he fulfilled. He said: 'Verily, I have appointed you an Imam** (**leader**) **for mankind.'** (**Abraham**) **pleaded: 'And of my offspring** (**as well**)**? He** (**Allah**) **said: 'My covenant does not include the unjust'.** (**2:124**).*

Commentary

Imamat, the Climax of Abraham's ('A) Honour

From this verse on, the topics of discussion are Abraham ('a), the honourable prophet of Allah and the hero of Monotheism, the structure of the Ka'bah, the sacred site of worship, and the importance of this great monotheistic center. These subjects are referred to in the next eighteen verses. Three main ideas were the objectives of these verses:

The first aim was that they might provide people with the necessary preparation for the change of the direction of the Qiblah and to inform Muslims that the Ka'bah is a legacy of Abraham ('a), the idol-breaker. If pagans and idol-worshippers used it as an idol temple, it was only temporarily and it did not decrease the glorious high rank of the Ka'bah at all.

The second goal was to address the problem of the Jews and Christians who were claiming to be the heirs of Abraham ('a) and his religion. These verses, reflecting back on the numerous former verses about the Jews, clarify how very unfamiliar they were with the creed of Abraham ('a).

The third purpose was that Arab pagans believed in a special incessant ancestral link between them and Abraham (‘a). They, too, had to be made to understand that their belief systems and codes of behaviour had no similarity with that of Abraham (‘a), the iconoclastic prophet.

In this verse, at first, it says:

***And** (**remember**) **when his Lord tested Abraham with words** (**of command**) **which he fulfilled…** (**2:124**).*

Yes, this verse speaks about the important occurrences in Abraham’s life, i.e. his great tests and how he passed them successfully, which illustrates his high rank and superior personality and manifests the worthiness of his being.

When Abraham (‘a) passed these trials successfully, Allah saw fit to give him a gift as a prize. Therefore, addressing him:

***…He said: ‘Verily, I have appointed you an Imam** (**leader**) **for mankind.’…** (**2:124**).*

In order that this Divine gift would continue in his seed, and prophethood and ‘Imamat’ would not come to an end with his death:

***…**(**Abraham**) **pleaded: ‘And of my offspring?’…** (**2:124**).*

The answer to this question was:

***…He** (**Allah**) **said: ‘My covenant does not include the unjust’.** (**2:124**).*

That is, I accepted your plea, but only for those of your offspring who are doers of righteous deeds and are pure and sinless i.e. those who are worthy of this rank.

Explanation: What does ‘Words’ Mean?

Studying the verses of the Qur’an and noting the great and important deeds that Abraham (‘a) fulfilled and, hence, being appointed to the position of Imamat by Allah, leads us to the conclusion that the term /kalim-at/ meaning ‘words’, or the Divine commandments by which Abraham (‘a) was tried, were not those of the usual sort. It clearly indicates that the tests were not connected with matters of ordinary reasoning or faith. They can never be considered ordinary tests. The purpose of the ‘words’ was a series of heavy, hard, laborious, grave duties which were given to Abraham, the sincere pure prophet (‘a), and he was the only one who had the qualifications to successfully complete them. Some of those commandments were such is the followings:

One trial was concerning the steadfastness of his faith in Allah. Abraham (‘a) was commanded through a vision in a dream to slay his son Ishmael. When he awoke, he unhesitatingly acted as he was bidden[1]. This indicates that Abraham (‘a) already knew that he was Allah’s prophet and what he saw in the vision

was no other than Allah's command. With such a certainty in his mind, he was willing to do, by Allah's command, something that no other loving or sensible father possibly could slay his own son.

In another incident, by Allah's command, he took and left his wife and his infant son to an area of dry land, where no food and water or any inhabitants could be found.

He also stood against the idol-worshippers of Babylon and very bravely defended Monotheism in his historical trial after he had broken their idols. He miraculously held firm in faith and patience when he was thrown into the midst of fire.

Recalcitrating, he emigrated from the land of idol-worshippers, and went to a faraway region in order to proclaim his prophecy.

He did many things similar to those mentioned above and each of those trials was, indeed, heavy and difficult for a man to undertake, but he, with the power of Faith, was able to perform them successfully thereby proving himself worthy of the position of 'Imamat', Divine leadership.

Eligibility for Imamat

Precisely speaking, it is understood from the above-mentioned verse that the position and rank of Imamat which was bestowed upon Abraham ('a), only after successfully enduring those frequent difficult trials, was above and beyond the rank of prophethood.

The primary sense of meaning of the term / imam / is that of being foremost, but it also has other different meanings including:

A) Leadership in the worldly social affairs of people, (as the Sunnite school of thought believes).

B) Authority over the religious affairs of people in this world (as some others of them have interpreted).

C) Responsibility of bringing religious duties into action, whether it is through the establishment of government in its vast meaning or performing the commandments and ordinances of Allah, and the execution of social justice along with the training of souls, both outwardly and inwardly. The rank of Imamat is higher than the rank of prophethood, because prophethood and messengership is only a matter of receiving some commandments from Allah and preaching them as glad tidings and warnings. All of these are true in the case of Imamat, in addition to practicing the Divine ordinances and training the souls of individuals, outwardly and inwardly. (It is clear, of course, that many of the prophets had had the rank of Imamat, too.)

Imamat, in fact, is the position of presenting the aims of religion practically, and guidance is 'attaining the ideal' not merely 'showing the way'.

Besides that, Imamat includes 'Divine Guidance', too. It means the innate quality of the Imam's spiritual

influence and the attracting glow of his pureness encompassing, deeply touching, and truly affecting the realm of receptive people's hearts which results in their spiritual guidance.

From this point of view, an Imam is just like the sun that, with its life-giving light, fosters and gives vitality to all living creatures. The function of an Imam in spiritual aspects is the same as the physical function of the sun.

The Holy Qur'an says:

He it is Who sends blessings on you, as do His angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of Darkness into Light: and He is Full of Mercy to the Believers. **(*33:43*).**

It is well understood from this verse that the special mercies of Allah and the hidden aid given by His angels can lead the believers and those who trust in Him to come out from 'darkness' into 'light'.

This is also true about an Imam. The innate authority of an Imam and the great prophets ('a) who had also possessed the rank of Imamat as well as their vicegerents, had a deep effect on receptive individuals by which they could train them and therefore bring them from the depths of ignorance and error into the light of guidance.

There is no doubt that the purpose of Imamat in this verse is the third meaning, because it is understood from many of the verses of the Qur'an that the concept of 'guidance' lies within the meaning of Imamat, as Surah As-Sajdah, says:

And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our Command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have Faith in Our Signs. **(*32:24*).**

This guidance does not mean merely 'showing the way', because, in principle, Abraham ('a) had the rank of prophethood and Messengership for giving guidance in the sense of 'showing the way' before becoming an Imam.

However, the Qur'an clearly attests to this fact that Imamat was bestowed on Abraham ('a) when he persevered with patience in tolerating the difficulties which he encountered as he paved the path of certitude alongside his Faith, and passed his various great tests successfully. This rank was above and beyond the rank of guidance with the meaning of preaching glad tidings and warning people.

Therefore, guidance within the concept of Imamat is nothing save 'attaining the ideal', cherishing the soul of religion and bringing forth training programmes for the individuals who are prepared to grasp them.

This meaning is cited in an expressive tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) which says: *"Verily, Allah, the Blessed, the Sublime, took Abraham ('a) as His slave before He took him as a prophet. And verily Allah took him as His Prophet before He took him as a messenger. And Allah took him as His messenger*

before He made him a confident (*khalil*)*. Allah took him as a confident before He appointed him as an Imam. When He had brought all these things together in him: He* (*Allah*) *said: 'Verily, I have appointed you an Imam* (*leader*) *for mankind'.*

The Imam ('a) continued: *"Since this was something very great in the eyes of Abraham, he said: 'And of my offspring* (*as well*)*?' He* (*Allah*) *said: 'My covenant does not include the unjust'."*

The Imam ('a) concluded: *"A stupid person cannot be the Imam of the pious."*2 This means that only those seed of Abraham ('a) who were pure and infallible were worthy of being Imam.

Prophethood, Messengership, Imamat and their Differences

As it is understood from the verses of the Qur'an and various ideas existing in traditions and Islamic literature, those who were commissioned by Allah had different ranks.

A. Prophethood means the ability to receive revelation from Allah. Then, a prophet is one on whom the Divine revelation comes down and whatever he receives by revelation he delivers to people.

B. Messengership means to preach the Divine revelation, to spread the ordinances of Allah, and to train the souls and minds of individuals through education and acknowledgement. Therefore, a Messenger is he who is commissioned, by effort and endeavour and utilizing any acceptable and proper means available to him, to invite people unto Allah and His commandments in order to elicit an ideological, convictional, educational and mental transformation in them.

C. Imamat, means to guide and lead people. In fact, an Imam is he who tries to execute, actually, Allah's ordinances by acquiring the power necessary to organize a godly government; and if he is not able to organize a formal government, he does his best in carrying out the ordinances of Allah, both personally and socially.

In other words, an Imam is commissioned to execute Allah's commandments and assure their performance, while a Messenger is commissioned to preach those commandments. Again, in other words, Messenger shows the path but an Imam, besides his other heavy responsibilities which were pointed out before, paves the path for 'attaining the ideal'.

Let it not remain unsaid that it is clear that many of the prophets, like the Prophet of Islam (S), were possessors of all three ranks. They had Divine revelation bestowed upon them. They preached the commandments of Allah and endeavoured in organizing godly governments for executing His ordinances, while they were training the souls of people according to their own religions.

In brief, Imamat is the essence of leadership in all aspects: materially and spiritually, physically and theologically, apparently and hiddenly. Imam is the chief of government as well as the leader of the society, a guide in religious affairs, and a teacher of ethics to train people both inwardly and outwardly.

It is the Imam who, with his mysterious spiritual strength, guides receptive persons forward along the path of inner development, instructs the ignorant ones with his ability and knowledge, and, by means of his government or other executive resources enforces the principles of Justice.

Imamat, the Climatical Rank of Abraham (‘A)

In defining the reality of Imamat, it was made clear that a person may become a prophet or a Messenger while he has not been appointed as an Imam. This position demands special eligibility in all aspects. It is the same position that Abraham (‘a) attained after successfully passing many difficult tests and proving his genuine worthiness; this being the last step of his development to qualify for that rank.

Some may imagine that the qualifications of an Imam is only that a person ‘be worthy and a model’. They do not consider the fact that this condition existed in Abraham from the very beginning of his prophethood. Furthermore, not only Abraham, but also all prophets and Messengers, had had this epithet from the onset of their calling. It is for this reason that a prophet should be sinless since his deeds are considered as models. Therefore, Abraham (‘a), who was a prophet and Messenger of Allah, was gifted the rank of Imamat by Allah after he passed his trials successfully and proved that he was worthy of it.

Who is Unjust?

The objective meaning of the Arabic word ‘the unjust, mentioned in this verse:

‘My covenant does not include the unjust’ **(*2:124*)**

is not only ‘being unjust to others’. But the term ‘unjust’ (in contrast with the philosophical meaning of ‘justice’ which means to set everything in its own proper place), here, is used with its broad sense of meaning. Thus, committing an ‘unjust’ act means that ‘a person, an action, or a thing has been arranged in a situation which is not appropriate’.

Since the position of Imamat and the outward and inward leadership of people is an extraordinarily splendid position with many responsibilities, the committing of the slightest sin or disobedience disqualifies a person from attaining this rank.

So, in the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) we see that, for proving the vicegerency of Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) immediately after the Holy Prophet (S), they have quoted this very verse as justification, indicating that others had been idol-worshippers before Islam, in the age of ignorance, and the only person who did not prostrate before an idol, besides Prophet Muhammad (S), even for a moment was ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a). What unjust act is greater than that a person performs idol-worshipping! Did Luqman not tell his son:

***O my son! Join not in worship* (*others*) *with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing.* (*31:13*).**

Hisham Ibn Salim, as an example, narrates from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) who said: *“Surely, Abraham was a prophet but he was not an Imam until when Allah said: ‘Verily, I have appointed you an Imam (leader) for mankind’. Abraham pleaded: ‘And of my offspring (as well)? ‘He (Allah) answered: ‘My covenant does not include the unjust’. Those who have worshipped an idol, they will not be an Imam (leader).”*[3]

In another tradition, ‘Abdillah Ibn Mas’ud narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: *“Allah told Abraham: ‘I do not give you My covenant (of Imamat) for the unjust of your children.’ Abraham said: ‘Who are these unjust whom Your covenant does not include of my offspring? Allah said: ‘Whoever prostrated before an idol, leaving Me, I will never make him an Imam “and he is not worthy of being an Imam...”*[4]

An Imam, by Allah’s Commission

It is also understood from the current verse that an Imam (a sinless comprehensive leader of people) should be appointed by Allah. The reason is that: firstly, Imamat is a kind of covenant from Allah and it is evident that such a person should be ordained by Him, the One Who is the Maker of the covenant.

Secondly, the persons who have even tainted their lives with iniquity, even as small as a dark spot, whether it is against themselves or against others, or if there is a sign of idol-worshipping even for a short period of time in their lives, they are not eligible for Imamat. They should be perfectly sinless throughout their whole lives in order to become an Imam.

It is Allah who knows the hearts and minds of men and has given us criteria by which to evaluate them. This point will be discussed more comprehensively at a later time.

If we want to recognize the vicegerent of the Prophet (S), according to the above criterion, there would not be anyone save Amir Al-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a).

It is noteworthy that the writer of *Al-Manar* narrates from Abu-Hanifah that he believed the government of the time was exclusively suitable for the Alawites. That was why he approved rebellion against their ruling government (which was headed by Mansoor of the Abbasids). And it was also for the same reason that he did not agree, himself, to be in charge of the position of Supreme Court Judge in the government of the Abbasids.

Then, the writer of *Al-Manar* adds that the four kalifs of the Sunnite school of thought all did not agree with the governments of their time, whom they did not approve as worthy chiefs of the Muslims, because the governors were some cruel unjust ones.[5]

It is ironical that, in our time, some of the Sunnite scholars approve and support the tyrannical governments whose relations with the enemies of Islam are certain and definite, and their mischief and unjust acts are clear to all. But, this is insignificant compared to the fact that, they also consider them /’ulul’amr/ ‘political and religious chiefs’ and / wajib ul ‘ita’ah / ‘necessary to be obeyed’.

Two Questions

This fact should also be noted that the concept of Imamat does not necessarily mean that an Imam forcedly leads all people to the Truth; but it means that people having their own free will, together with their potential for receptiveness and their eligibility, can take advantage of and use the Imam's quality of effectiveness in outward and inward leadership in order to be guided.

It is just like we stated earlier, that the sun has been created to furnish light, heat and energy for all living creatures which have the potential to receive these bounties and are capable of development.

Another question that may be proposed is that according to the above it seems that every Imam previously must have been a prophet or a Messenger and then be appointed as an Imam, whereas the sinless vicegerents of the Holy Prophet (S) were not in such a position.

As an answer, we say that it is not necessary that the Imam, himself, be previously a prophet or a Messenger and then reach that position. When his predecessor had the rank of prophethood, Messengership and Imamat, (such as the Prophet of Islam (S)), the eligible vicegerent can continue executing the duties of Imamat as an Imam. This situation occurs when a new Messenger is not needed, like after the Prophet of Islam (S), who is the seal of the prophets.

In other words, if the process of receiving Divine revelation and communicating all the ordinance have been formerly performed and, only the stage of their execution remains, the true successors of the prophet can continue the prophet's line of execution, and it does not necessitate that he, himself, be a prophet or a Messenger.

The Distinguished Personality of Abraham ('A)

Abraham's ('a) name is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in 69 occurrences which are gathered in 25 Surahs. In these verses, this great prophet ('a), whose worthy epithets are mentioned therein, is highly praised and appreciated by Allah from all aspects. He was a prototype, an example, of a complete human being.

The supremeness of his knowledge about Allah, his clear logical statements against idol-worshippers, his intense efforts and endeavours in challenging with the tyrants of his time, his dedication and forbearance in obeying the commands of Allah, and his unique perseverance against the storms of adventures and grievous trials, are all good examples for Muslims, and those who pave the path towards Allah, to take and follow in their lives as their models.

As the Qur'an says about Abraham ('a), he was of the elect and good,[6] in the ranks of the Righteous,[7] a model,[8] a man of truth,[9] most tender-hearted, and forbearing.[10] Furthermore, he was incomparably, brave and extraordinarily generous as well.

Allah Willing, we will offer a more detailed explanation concerning this matter later when commenting on

some of the verses of Surah Ibrahim, No. 14, especially the last part of the Surah.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 125

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْناً وَاتَّخِذُواْ مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

***And** (**remember**) **when We made the House** (**the Ka'bah in Mecca**) **a resort and a secure sanctuary for the people** (**saying**): **'Take to yourselves Abraham's Station for a place of prayer'. And We enjoined Abraham and Ismail** (**saying**): **'Sanctify My House for those who go around it, for those who abide in it and pay devotion, and to those who bow down and prostrate themselves'.** (**2:125**)*

Commentary

The Magnificence of the Ka'bah

After explaining the high rank of Abraham ('a) stated in the previous verse, the Qur'an, in this verse, directs attention towards the magnificence of the House, the Ka'bah in Mecca, which was built by Abraham and his son ('a). It says:

***And** (**remember**) **when We made the House** (**the Ka'bah in Mecca**) **a resort and a secure sanctuary for the people...** (**2:125**)*

Since the term /mathabah/ originally based on /thaub/, means 'a place to which people return' or 'a place where people assemble', and the Ka'bah has been a center where monotheists gather every year, then, by this assembly, believers, not only bodily but also spiritually, return to Divine Unity and to their intrinsic nature. So, that may be why the term /mathabah/ (a resort, an abode, a house) has been used for this Sacred House. And, since a man's house is the continuous returning site of its inhabitants who, after having completed their affairs, can experience rest and tranquility therein, there lies this sense of resting and tranquility in the meaning of the term /mathabah/. This emphasizes the concept of its next word / amnan / 'secure sanctuary' especially with the word 'people', which indicates that this secure center is a common refuge for all people of the world.

This is, in fact, the acceptance by Allah of one of the requests that Abraham ('a) sought. (We will discuss this subject on page 300.)

Then, it adds:

*...(**saying**): **'Take to yourselves Abraham's Station for a place of prayer.'...** (**2:125**)*

The opinions of the commentators are divided as to what, 'Abraham's Station' is. Some of them have

said that the whole Hajj is Abraham's Station. Some others have rendered it to / 'arafah /' the Mount of Recognition', / mas'arul haram / 'Sacred Monument', and / jamarat / 'lapidations'; while others believe that the entire sacred premises of Mecca is considered the 'Station'.

But, as many Islamic narrations denote, and many of the commentators have said, too, the verse apparently refers to the very standing-place of Abraham which is located close to the Ka'bah where pilgrims offer their circumambulatory prayer after performing their ritual circumambulation of the Ka'bah. Thus, the purpose of the term / musalla /, mentioned in the verse, is 'the place of prayer', too.

Then, it refers to the covenant that He made with Abraham ('a) and Ismail ('a) about the purification of the Ka'bah, where it says:

***...And We enjoined Abraham and Ismail* (*saying*): '*Sanctify My House for those who go around it, for those who abide in it and pay devotion, and to those who bow down and prostrate themselves*' (*2:125*)**

What is the meaning of sanctification here? Some have said that the meaning of sanctification here is purification from the existence of idols.

Some others have said that the purpose is purification from outward dirt, like blood and the contents of animals' stomachs which people sacrificed therein, because there were some ignorant persons who thoughtlessly did such deeds as leaving these remains behind.

Furthermore, some believe that sanctification, here, means 'purity of intent' when building this House of Monotheism.

There is no reason for us to confine the meaning of sanctification here. Its purpose is purification of this 'House of Monotheism' from any dirt, physically and spiritually.

It is for this reason that in some traditions we read that this verse has been rendered into sanctification from pagans and in some others into washing and purifying the body from dirt.

Explanation: The Secure Refuge, its Social and Educational Effects

According to the above verse, 'the House of Ka'bah' has been chosen and proclaimed as 'a secure refuge' by Allah. We know that there are resolute rules in Islam instructing every believer to avoid any quarrel, war, fight and bloodshed within the limits of this Holy land, Mecca. It is so that not only the members of humankind, regardless of nationality, race, gender, group, or condition, should be safe and secure there, but also animals and birds are protected there, in that nobody is allowed to hurt them.

In this world, where fighting and wars are always within the overall scene, the existence of such a peaceful center can function as a special helpful fortress within which the problems of many nations can be solved. The security of this region lets different peoples, with all their differences and enmities that

they may have, gather together therein, sitting, speaking, and solving their difficulties. Thus, one of the most important problems which usually exist, initiating face to face oral communications about dismissing or decreasing enmities between nations, can be solved.

It frequently happens that the two sides of a conflict or the opposing governments in the world are willing to put an end to their antagonism and have parley for this purpose, but they cannot find a secure and respectable place wherein both sides can feel free to speak therein peacefully and securely. This case has been anticipated in Islam, and Mecca is introduced as such a center.

Now that most of the Muslims of the world are unfortunately involved in some hostile conflicts, they can make use of this sacred secure land, and, under its banner of holiness and special spirituality which enlightens the hearts, begin speaking with each other to solve their problems.

Why the 'House' of Ka'bah?

In the above verse, the Ka'bah is referred to by the Lord as 'My House', while it is clear that neither is Allah bodily substance nor does He need a House. The purpose, here, is to honour and glorify the Ka'bah by stating its honour and lofty status, and, therefore, it is called /baytullah/ 'the House of Allah'.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 126

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَـذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُم بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلاً ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

***And** (**remember**) **when Abraham said: 'My Lord, make this a secure City and provide its people with fruits such of them that believe in Allah and the Last Day.' He said: 'And whoever disbelieves, I shall let him enjoy himself for a little while, then I shall drive him to the Punishment of Fire and an evil destination it is!'** (**2: 126**)*

Commentary

Abraham's ('A) Petition to Allah!

In this verse Abraham ('a) asks Allah two great requests in favour of the inhabitants of this Holy land, one of which was referred to in the previous verse. The Qur'an says:

***And** (**remember**) **when Abraham said: 'My Lord, make this a secure City…'** (**2: 126**)*

As it was pointed out in the previous verse, Allah accepted this invocation from Abraham ('a) and set this Holy land as a secure center, both outward and inward security.

His second petition was thus:

'...and provide its people with fruits such of them that believe in Allah and the Last Day.'... **(*2:126*)**

It is interesting that Abraham ('a) requested 'security' first, and then he asked for material gifts which itself is a reference to the fact that a safe and sound economic status is not possible unless there exists security in a town or country.

The opinions are divided amongst the commentators as to the meaning of the term 'fruits' here. On the whole, it seems that the word has a vast meaning, so broad that it includes any material bounty whether it is fruits or other nutritious substances, as well as spiritual bounties.

Concerning the meaning of this term in the above verse, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in a tradition has said: *"It is the fruits of hearts."*[11] This indicates that Allah attracts the attention and affection of human beings to the people of this Holy land.

This is also noteworthy, that Abraham ('a) invocates this petition only for the believers in Allah, the only True God, and the Last Day, because he might have realized from the statement:

My covenant does not include the unjust, **(*2:124*)**

cited in the former verse, the fact that some groups of his future offspring would follow the path of polytheism and injustice; then, to show reverence in a courteous manner, here, he did not include them in his petition.

However, Allah's answer to this invocation of Abraham ('a) was:

...He said: 'And whoever disbelieves, I shall let him enjoy himself for a little while then I shall drive him to the Punishment of Fire and an evil destination it is! **(*2:126*)**

This is, in fact, the same 'General Mercy' of Allah by which His unlimited bounties are available to all creatures so that good doers and evildoers equally enjoy from His vast bountiful Table in this world, but in the next world, where His 'Specific Mercy' comes forth, wrongdoers will have no share of it and also they will have no way to rescue themselves.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 127-129

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

And **(*remember*)** ***when Abraham and Ismail raised up the foundations of the House;*** **(*saying*)***: 'Our Lord! Accept*** **(*this service*)** ***from us; for surely You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing'*** **(*2:127*)**

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

'Our Lord, make us submissive **(*Muslims*)** ***to You, and of our progeny an Ummah*** **(*a nation*)** ***submissive to You, and show us our ways of worship, and turn to us*** **(*mercifully*)*; for surely You are the Oft-Returning, the Most Merciful'*** **(*2:128*)**

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ العَزِيزُ الحَكِيمُ

'Our Lord, send amongst them an Apostle of their own who shall recite unto them Your revelations, teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; for surely You are All-mighty, All-Wise' **(*2:129*)**

Commentary

The Structure of The House of Ka'bah

It is clearly understood from the numerous verses of the Qur'an, the Islamic traditions, and some historical records that the House of Ka'bah had been founded before Abraham (‘a) and that it had been established at the time of Adam (‘a). Surah Ibrahim quoting from the tongue of Abraham (‘a), says:

Our Lord! Surely, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive **(*of fruit*)** ***near Your Sacred House...*** **(*14:37*).**

This verse confirms that when Abraham (‘a) with his wife and his infant son Ismail arrived at the Holy land of Mecca, there was no sign of the Ka'bah seen therein, but he was guided there by Divine inspiration.

Another verse says:

The first House **(*of worship*)** ***appointed for men was that at Bakka: full of blessing...*** **(*3:96*).**

It is certain that the worshipping of Allah and the structure of the center of adoration did not begin from the time of Abraham (‘a). It had started before that and was established at the time of Adam (‘a).

The idea mentioned in the verse under discussion indicates the same meaning, too. It says:

And **(*remember*)** ***when Abraham and Ismail raised up the foundations of the House;*** **(*saying*)*: 'Our Lord! Accept*** **(*this service*)** ***from us; for surely You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing'*** **(*2:127*)**

This statement refers to the concept that the foundations of the Ka'bah had existed from before, and Abraham (‘a) and Ismail (‘a) raised them up.

Hadrat Amir Al-Mu'minin ‘Ali (‘a) in one of his sermons known as *al-Khutbah al-Qasi'ah* (Sermon of Disparagement) also says: *"Do you not see that Allah, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam, up to the last ones in this world with stones... He made*

those stones into His Sacred House... Then He commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it..."[12]

In short, the verses of the Qur'an and the Islamic narrations confirm this historical fact that the House of Ka'bah was originally built by Adam ('a). Then during the Flood at the time of Noah, it fell down. Then, later, it was rebuilt by the hands of Abraham ('a) with the aid of his son Ismail ('a).

The second of the above two verses attests to the fact that Abraham ('a) and his son Ismail ('a) sought from Allah five important invocations. These prayers, which were offered when they were busy building the Ka'bah, are so exact and consistent with all the necessities of material and spiritual life, that they can lead man to the recognition of the magnificence of the souls of these two great Apostles of Allah.

At first, Abraham ('a) prays:

'Our Lord, make us submissive (Muslims) to You... **(*2:128*)**

Then he invocates:

...and of our progeny an Ummah (a nation) submissive to You... **(*2:128*)**

He continues saying:

...and show us our ways of worship... **(*2:128*)**

(So that we can adore You in a way worthy of Your Highness).

After that, he ('a) seeks Allah for repentance, thus:

...and turn to us (mercifully); for surely You are the Oft-Returning, the Most Merciful'. **(*2:128*)**

The fifth invocation, which was sought from Allah at the time of constructing the Holy Ka'bah by Abraham and Ismail ('a), is this:

'Our Lord, send amongst them an Apostle of their own who shall recite unto them Your revelations, teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; for surely You are All-mighty, All-Wise.' **(*2:129*)**

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 130-132

وَمَن يَرْغَبُ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلاَّ مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And who turns away from Abraham's creed but he who makes a fool of himself? Indeed, We chose him in this world, and in the Hereafter surely, he shall be among the Righteous. **(*2:130*)**

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of all worlds'. (***2:131***)

وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إَلاَّ وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

And this did Abraham bequeath to his sons, and (***so did***) ***Jacob, 'My children, Allah has chosen for you the Faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims'.*** (***2:132***)

Abraham ('A), a Human Prototype

In the former verses, Abraham's personality was partly introduced. Some of his services and quite a few of his comprehensive invocations, which included material and spiritual aspects, were discussed.

From the totality of these words, it is concluded that this great Apostle can be a good model for all the truth-seekers throughout the world, and his school of thought can be an instruction guideline for all human beings.

Based on this very matter, in the first verse of the above verses, it says:

And who turns away from Abraham's creed but he who makes a fool of himself!... (***2:130***)

Is this not foolishness that one forsakes such a pure brilliant creed and goes astray along the misleading paths of polytheism, blasphemy, and corruption? This is a religion which is appropriate for and coinciding with the soul and nature of man. It is a process that parallels wisdom and logic. This creed is beneficial for man both in the present world and the next world.

Then, it adds:

...Indeed, We chose him in this world, and in the Hereafter surely he will be among the Righteous... (***2:130***)

Yes, Abraham ('a) is chosen by Allah, and he is among the ranks of the righteous and that is why he should be chosen as a model.

The next verse, as an emphasis, refers to one of the other outstanding qualities which is, in fact, the origin of the rest of his qualities.

When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of all worlds'. (***2:131***)

Yes, it is when Abraham ('a), that pure true believer and self-sacrificer, hearkens to the call of his innate nature that the Lord enjoins him 'Submit', and he submits himself totally to His command. Abraham ('a)

sees that the stars, the moon, and the sun, all in all, have precise settings. Then he, with his mind and perception finds out that they are subject to the regulations of creation. Therefore, he proclaims that none of them can be his Lord, and he says:

For me, I have set my face firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall give partners to God (***6:79***)

In fact, the first step to attaining worthiness for a person is through purity and sincerity, and it was owing to this same quality in Abraham (‘a) that he was able to submit exclusively to the command of Allah, therefore He was pleased with him and chose him, and for this same reason He selected him to introduce His religion.

The entirety of Abraham’s (‘a) deeds, throughout his life, from beginning up to the end, were unique. One of his expressions of faith was through his challenge with idol worshippers and star worshippers. Another was when, while in the midst of fire, he showed such strength of faith that his hostile enemy, Nimrod, was so affected by him that he unwillingly said: If a person wants to take a god, he should take one similar to the God of Abraham (‘a).[13]

Also, bringing his wife and suckling son to that hot dry land, i.e. the Holy land, building the House of Ka’bah, and taking his beloved son into the place of sacrifice, each was an example of the resoluteness of his manner.

Abraham’s (‘a) bequest to his children at the last moments of his life was also a model, as the last verse of the verses under discussion says:

And this did Abraham bequeath to his sons, and (***so did***) ***Jacob…*** (***2:132***).

Each of them told their sons:

…‘My children, Allah has chosen for you the Faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims’ (***2:132***)

It seems that the Qur’an by stating the bequest of Abraham (‘a) intends to reiterate the fact that you human beings are not only responsible for your children while they are with you, but you are responsible for their futures, too. When you are on your deathbed, do not think of only your financial affairs and that of your children after your death; you had better think about their spiritual life, too.

Not only did Abraham (‘a) bequeath such a testament, but also his grandson, Jacob (‘a), imitated Abraham’s same manner and at the last moments of his life enjoined his children to attain the secret of victory, success and happiness via this short phrase: ***‘Submit to the Lord of the worlds’***.

The mentioning of Jacob from among all prophets, here in this verse, is perhaps with the aim of telling the Jews and Christians, who each in their own way used to join themselves to Jacob, that the

blasphemic creeds which they followed and the lack of pure submission in the Truth that they showed by their actions, did not coincide with the manner of the one whom they joined themselves to.

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1. Refer to verses 37:105–108.
2. Usul al-Kafi: Vol. 1, chapter 2 concerning the degrees of the prophets (Nabiy), the Messengers (Rasul), and the Imams ('a), p. 133.
3. Usul al-Kafi Vol. 1, chapter: prophets and Messenger, Tradition 1.
4. Al-Amali by Shaykh Tusi published in 1414, p. 379.
5. Al-Manar, Vol. 1, pp. 457–458.
6. Refer to Surah Sad, 38:47.
7. Refer to Surah Nahl, 16:122.
8. Refer to Surah Nahl, 16:120.
9. Refer to Surah Maryam, 19:41.
10. Refer to Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:114.
11. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 12, pp. 86 and 100.
12. Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 192.
13. Al-Kafi, Vol. 8, p. 368, narration 559.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 16 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 134 - 141

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 133-134

أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاء إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي قَالُواْ نَعْبُدُ إِلَـهَكَ وَإِلَـهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَـهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Nay, were you witnesses when death approached Jacob? When he said to his sons: 'What will you worship after me?'. They said: 'We will worship your God and the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ismail and Isaac, the One (true) God (alone) and to Him we do submit.' (2:133)

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلاَ تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

That is a nation that has passed away; theirs is that, which they have earned, and yours is what

you have earned; you shall not be questioned for what they had been doing. (***2:134***).

Occasion of Revelation

A group of the Jews believed that when Jacob (‘a) was on his deathbed, he enjoined on his children the same religion which the Jews currently believe in (with all its corruption of the scriptures). For the nullification of their belief, Allah sent down this verse.[1]

Commentary

Everyone is Responsible for his Own Deeds

As it is also understood from the apparent meaning of the verse, there were some rejecters of Islam who falsely charged Jacob (‘a), the prophet of Allah, regarding this matter. (The matter was mentioned in the description of the occasion of revelation).

To reject this false claim, the Qur’an says:

Nay, were you witnesses when death approached Jacob?… (***2:133***)

Were you there when he frankly questioned his children the way he did? Yes, that which you (Jews) charge Jacob (‘a) with is not true.

The factual account which occurred was that:

…When he said to his sons: ‘what will you worship after me?’. They said: ‘We will worship your God and the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ismail and Isaac, the One (***true***) ***God*** (***alone***) ***and to Him we do submit’.*** (***2:133***).

Yes, he did not enjoin them with anything but to believe in monotheism and to submit to the command of Allah, which is the root of submission to all the Divine ordinances.

It can be deduced from this verse that when Jacob was on his deathbed, a feeling of anxiety and worry existed in him about the future of his children. Finally, he expressed his anxiety and asked his sons what they would worship after him. He especially asked ‘what (thing) ‘and he did not ask ‘whom’, because there were some idol-worshippers in the locale who used to prostrate before some particular ‘things’. Jacob wanted to know whether there was any tendency towards those beliefs in the depths of their hearts. But when he heard his children’s answer, he found, again, his peace of mind.

This is also noteworthy that Ismail (‘a) was not Jacob’s father or forefather, but he was Jacob’s uncle, whereas in the verse under discussion, the term / aba’ / which is the plural of the word / ‘ab / (father) has been applied. This makes it clear that, in the Arabic language, this word was sometimes used for ‘uncle’. Hence, we say that if this word has been used regarding ‘Azar in the Qur’an, it does not negate the fact

that ’Azar was Abraham’s uncle, not his father.

The last of the above verses mentioned is an answer to one of the delusions of the Jews. They emphasized very much on their ancestors and the honour and glory they ascribed themselves in relation to Allah. They imagined that even when they tainted themselves with sin, they could be rescued under the comforting shade of such ancestors. Then, the Qur’an says:

That is a nation that has passed away; theirs is that which they have earned, and yours is what you have earned… (***2:134***)

And, in the same way that they are not responsible for your deeds, also,

…you shall not be questioned for what they had been doing. (***2:134***).

Therefore, instead of expending all your energy trying to prove that you, by right of ancestry, deserve the honour and high position that your pure ancestors enjoyed, you should try to improve your own Faith and deeds.

The addressees in this verse are apparently the Jews and ‘the People of the Book’, but it is evident that this statement is not specifically referring to them alone, in that this basic principle pertains to us Muslims, too.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 135-137

وَقَالُواْ كُونُواْ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُواْ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

And they said: ‘Be Jews or Christians, you shall be guided aright’. Say: ‘Nay! Rather the creed of Abraham, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners to Allah’. (***2:135***).

قُولُواْ آمَنَّا بِاللّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say: ‘We have believed in Allah and that which has been sent down to us, and (***in***) ***what was sent down to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes; and*** (***in***) ***that which was given to Moses and Jesus and*** (***in***) ***that which was given to all prophet from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit’.*** (***2:136***)

فَإِنْ آمَنُواْ بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَواْ وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

***If then they believe in what you believe, they indeed are guided* (*aright*)*; but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism; Allah will suffice you against them; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.* (*2:137*).**

Occasion of Revelation

Upon the occasion of revelation of these verses it is narrated from Ibn Abbas that some of the Jewish scholars and some Christians from Najran were disputing with the Muslims. Each of these two groups considered their own creed more superior than the other's regarding the Truth, then they negated each other. The Jews said that their prophet, Moses (‘a), was superior and their Book, the Torah, was the best. The Christians, on the other hand, had the same claim. They said Jesus (‘a) was the best guide and the Evangel was the best among the heavenly Books. Even though they could not settle their own disputes between themselves, the followers of both creeds invited the Muslims to their own religion. The above verses were revealed and answered them both.[2]

Commentary

Only Our Creed is True!

Egoism and self-conceit usually cause one to think that Truth is exclusively his own and therefore, he considers others wrong. This very person, consequently, tries to divert others to his own way of seeing things, as the Qur'an through the first verse of the above verses says:

***And they said: 'Be Jews or: Christians, you shall be guided aright'…* (*2:135*)**

Tell them that distorted religions can never be the source of guidance, but:

***…Say: 'Nay! Rather the creed of Abraham, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners to Allah'.* (*2:135*).**

The true believers in pure Faith are those who follow the pure Monotheistic creed, i.e. the Monotheism which has never been tainted with any form of polytheism. The most important basic principle for recognizing the pure religion from the corrupted ones is by keeping in mind this very perfect creed of Monotheism.

Islam instructs us not to make distinction between the divine prophets and to respect their religions totally because the fundamental principles of all Divine religions are entirely the same. Moses (‘a) and Jesus (‘a) reinstituted the pure (hanif) doctrine of Abraham (‘a), which is to live and die with faith in the One True God. They believed in the non-polytheistic creed of Abraham (‘a), the pure Monotheist, although their religions were later contaminated with polytheism by their ignorant followers. The Jews, though they taught Unity, went after false gods, and the Christians invented the trinity or borrowed it from pagans. (Of course, if they search for the pureness of truth, they will realize that there is no difference

between what their prophets preached and what was brought forth by Islam and that they, in performing their duties today, should follow the divine creed of Islam which has come down from the direction of Allah for this Age).

Concerning the statements of the Muslims' opponents, the next verse enjoins the followers of Islam thus:

Say: 'We have believed in Allah and that which has been sent down to us, and* (*in*) *what was sent down to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes; and* (*in*) *that which was given to Moses and Jesus and* (*in*) *that which was given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit'. (***2:136***)

Self-conceit and tribal or racial prejudices should never lie at the root of our accepting some of the prophets and rejecting the others. They were all Divine teachers who spent their lives training and guiding people in different eras of time. Their aim was only to guide human beings towards pure Unity, Truth, and Justice, although each of them had some particular duties and special qualifications related to their own specific periods of time.

Then it adds:

If then they believe in what you believe, they indeed are guided* (*aright*) *but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism... (***2:137***)

If they do not mix their racial and tribal problems, and the likes of them, with the religion, and formally accept all the prophets, they are also guided, otherwise they have put away the truth and followed the wrong.

The term / siqaq / originally means 'cleft, conflict, and fight' and, here, it has been rendered into 'blasphemy', and sometimes into 'misleading', or 'separation from Truth and tending to falsehood', all of which, in fact, basically point back to the same fact.

Some of the commentators have cited that when the former verse was revealed whereby Jesus ('a) was mentioned in a row with some other prophets, some of the Christians said that they did not agree with that statement because Jesus ('a) was not like other prophets; he was the son of God. The last verse of the above verses was sent down3 and warned them that they were misguided and they were in schism.

However, at the end of the verse, it encourages the Muslims not to be afraid of the plots of enemies; saying:

...Allah will suffice you against them; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (***2:137***)

Explanation: The Oneness of the Prophets' Invitation

On several occasions, the Holy Qur'an points out that there is no difference between the prophets of

Allah because all of them had received the revelation from one single Source and pursued one goal. Therefore, the Qur'an enjoins the Muslims to respect all of the Divine prophets equally. But, as it was stated before, this exhortation does not conflict with the idea that every new religion sent down from Allah abrogates the former religions and Islam is the last religion in the world.

Of course, no religion on earth, except Islam, has ever demanded of its adherents to believe equally in the truthfulness and flawless godliness, sinless purity of conduct and character of the other apostles of Allah and in the other sacred scripts as the revealed Word of Allah. This command in Islam was given because the Divine Apostles were like some teachers and everyone of them instructed the human race as one class. It is evident that when the period and the course of one class finishes, the trainees will be promoted to another teacher, to a class of a higher degree. Therefore, all nations are to fulfill the requirements given by the last prophet of their times, which is the last stage of the development of the religion in their period of time. This statement will never contrast the rightfulness of the invitations of other prophets.

Who were 'Asbat '?

The term / sebt / originally means: 'stretching, or expanding of something easily'. A tree is sometimes called 'sabat 'because its branches expand freely. The leading lexicologists expressly declare that / sebt / the plural of which is / asbat / include sons' children and daughters' children.[4]

The meaning of the term / asbat /, here is the groups and tribes of Israelites who came forth from Jacob's twelve sons, and, since there were some prophets among them, in the above verse they are counted among those upon whom the Divine verses have been sent down.

So, the objective meaning of the term, here, is the tribe of Israelites or the tribes of Jacob's children who consisted of some prophets, not all the children of Jacob. Some of those children were not entirely eligible to be prophets because they committed sin in their dealings with their own brother.

The Arabic term / hanif / is based on / hanaf / with the meaning 'orthodox, true', or 'inclined from misguidance to right opinion'. So, those pure monotheists who turn away from polytheism and incline to this basic principle are called 'Hanif'.

It is also for this reason that one of the meanings of / hanif / is 'true, straight'.

This explanation makes it clear that the meaning offered by the commentators for the term / hanif / such as Hajj, the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, adhering to truth, following Abraham ('a), and the pureness of deeds, are all reflections of that inclusive meaning and each of them is an example of it.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 138-141

صِبْغَةَ اللّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدونَ

(***Receive***) ***the baptism of Allah and who is better than Allah in baptizing? And Him do we worship.*** (***2:138***).

قُلْ أَتُحَآجُّونَنَا فِي اللّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ

Say (***to the Jews and Christians***)***: Would you dispute with us concerning Allah Who is our Lord and your Lord? For us are our deeds and for you are your deeds: and we are sincere to Him'.*** (***2:139***).

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأسْبَاطَ كَانُواْ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى قُلْ أَأَنتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللّهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِندَهُ مِنَ اللّهِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Or do you claim that Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: 'Who then knows best, you or Allah?' Who is more unjust than he who conceals testimony received from Allah? And Allah is not heedless of what you do. (***2:140***).

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلاَ تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ

That is a nation that has passed away; theirs is that which they have earned and yours is what you earned; you shall not be questioned for what they had been doing. (***2:141***).

Commentary

Following the invitation, in the former verses, to the adherents of all religions to accept the Divine messages of all prophets, in the first verse of this group of verses, it commands them all to:

(***Receive***) ***the baptism of Allah...*** (***2:138***)

Which is the same as the purification by Faith and true monotheism resulting in the manifestation of one true colour? Then, it adds:

...and who is better than Allah in baptizing? And Him do we worship. (***2:138***)

Thus, the Qur'an commands that all racial, tribal and other separative colours be put aside and that everyone take on (symbolically) the colour of Allah.

Some commentators have recorded that it was a custom among the Christians to baptize their new-born

children in baptismal water which was mixed with dye or a colour, signifying that the baptized person received new colour in life. They said that this baptism, especially with this particular colour, caused the person to be cleaned from the original sin that he had inherited from Adam (‘a).

The Qur’an rejects this baseless logic and tells them that in order to purify their souls and minds from any stain of sin instead of using colours of rituals, superstitions and dispersiveness; they had better accept the colour of truthfulness and godliness.

Truly, what a delicate and beautiful sentence it is! How nice it would be if all people accepted the godly colour, i.e. the colour of unity, purity and virtue! viz. the colour of colourlessness, the colour of justice, equality, patience and perseverance. Under the light of the colour of unity and sincerity, all conflicts and fights can be put to an end and the main weed of polytheism and dispersion might be rooted out.

This is, in fact, that very colourlessness, or in other words, pulling away of all colours.

In several traditions, commenting on this verse, it is narrated from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) who has said that the objective meaning of / sibqatallah / ‘the baptism of Allah’ is the pure creed of Islam.[5] This idea is also a reference to what was said in the above.

Some of the Jews, and some others, occasionally disputed with the Muslims claiming that all the prophets were chosen from among them and their religion was the oldest of all religions, and their book was the most ancient of Divine Books. They said that if Muhammad (S) had really been a prophet, he would have been appointed from among them. They sometimes said that their race was superior to the Arab race, for the acceptance of creeds, and they were more receptive to revelation than Arabs, because they had practically been idol-worshippers while the Jews were not.

The Jews considered themselves the sons of God, the ones who claimed Heaven exclusively theirs. The Qur’an refuses all of these false imaginations. At first, it tells the Prophet (S):

***Say* (*to the Jews and Christians*): ‘*Would you dispute with us concerning Allah Who is our Lord and your Lord?…* (*2:139*)**

This Lord is not exclusively for one particular tribe or a certain race. He is the Lord of all human beings and all creatures in the world of existence.

Addressing them, it adds that they should also know that: there are no privileges for anyone except for those attained by a person’s good deeds:

***…For us are our deeds and for you are your deeds…* (*2:139*)**

But there is a difference between those deeds. We serve Him sincerely and associate none with Him, (while most of you have polluted Unity with polytheism):

...and we are sincere to Him... (***2:139***)

The next verse replies to some other vain claims of theirs. It says:

Or do you claim that Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: 'Who then knows best, you or Allah?'... (***2:140***)

Allah knows best of all that they were neither Jewish nor Christian.

You also know, whether you admit it or not, that many of those prophets came in to this world before Moses (‘a) and Jesus (‘a), and if you do not know it, then you have ignorantly charged them with such a belie which in itself, is a great sin and an attempt at hiding the true fact. Thus:

...Who is more unjust than he who conceals testimony received from Allah? And Allah is not heedless of what you do. (***2:140***)

What a wonder! When it happens that a person's mind is dominated by obstinacy and prejudice, he denies even the well-known facts of history. For instance, the Jews counted the prophets such as Abraham (‘a), Isaac (‘a) and Jacob (‘a), who came into the world and passed away before Moses and Jesus, as being from among the followers of Moses (‘a) and Jesus (‘a). They denied the above-mentioned fact which is pertinent to the fate of their people and defines their Faith and religion. It may be for this very reason that the Qur'an introduces them as the most unjust. There is no unjust action worse than that some persons intentionally deny some facts in order to misguide people so that they wander aimlessly in that misguidance.

In the last of the verses under discussion, which is also the last verse of the first part (out of the thirty parts) of the Holy Qur'an, the Qur'an answers them in another style indicating that supposing all these claims were correct, then, this is the answer:

That is a nation that has passed away; theirs is that which they have earned and yours is what you earned; you shall not be questioned for what they had been doing. (***2:141***)

In conclusion, a nation should rely upon its own deeds, not on its past history. As a person should thrive on his own excellencies, not on those of his ancestors.

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1. Tafsir al-Abulfutuh-Razi, Vol. 1, p. 339.
2. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 216.
3. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 218.
4. Arabic-English Lexicon, part 4, p. 1294, by: E.W. Lane.
5. Nur ath-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, p. 132.

SHARES

Section 17 – Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 142 – 147

Part Two[1]

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 142

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاء مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلاَّهُمْ عَن قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُواْ عَلَيْهَا قُل لِّلّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

The fools among the people will say: 'What has turned them from their Qiblah (direction of prayer) which they were facing at.' Say: 'Allah's is the East and the West; He guides whoever He pleases to a straight way'. (2:142).

Commentary

Occasion of the Change of Qiblah

This verse together with a few verses following it refers to one of the great happenings in the history of Islam which caused a huge wave of excitement among the people of that time. The explanation for the occurrence is that the Prophet of Islam (S), under divine direction, prayed towards the direction of Jerusalem for thirteen years in Mecca after proclaiming his mission and then, also, for several months in Medina after his migration. But again, under divine direction, the Qiblah (i.e. the direction of prayer) was changed and Muslims were commissioned to pray towards the Ka'bah.

The commentators are divided as to the length of time that Muslims worshipped facing towards Jerusalem in Medina. The duration of this ritual situation has been cited from seven to seventeen months. However, during this period, Muslims were always entangled with the reproaches of the Jews, because Jerusalem was originally the Jewish Qiblah. Since the Muslims used to pray towards the direction of Jerusalem, the Jewish Qiblah, during that time, they blamed that their (Muslims) acceptance of their (Jewish) Qiblah proved, as they thought, that the Jews were right in their creed and Muslims, who were not independent for themselves in the direction of prayer, were not.

These statements were difficult for the Prophet of Islam (S) and Muslims to bear. They were, on one hand, showing obedience to the command of Allah, and, on the other hand, the ceaseless sarcasm of

the Jews was intolerable. It was for this reason that by night Prophet Muhammad (S) occasionally turned his face towards the heavens in a way that showed he was expecting to receive Divine revelation.

After some time of waiting, finally the command for changing the Qiblah was revealed. It was while the Prophet (S) was praying the noon prayer and he had already performed only two rak'ats of the prayer in Bani-Salim Mosque towards the direction of Jerusalem when Gabriel was commissioned by Allah to take the arm of the Prophet (S) and turn his face towards the direction of the Ka'bah.

The Jews were annoyed with this occurrence and according to their old traditional style, they began seeking pretexts. Aforetime, they used to say that they were superior to Muslims because Muslims were dependent on the Jews regarding their Qiblah. But, when the command of changing the Qiblah was sent down by the Lord, a party of the Jews protested; as the Qur'an says:

***The fools among the people will say: 'What has turned them from their Qiblah* (*direction of prayer*) *which they were facing at?'...* (*2:142*)**

The Jews disputed about why the Muslims altered the former prophets' Qiblah that day. They said if the first Qiblah was correct, then why the change? And, if the second one was right, then why had they been praying towards the direction of Jerusalem for more than thirteen years?

The Lord ordered His Apostle thus:

***...Say: 'Allah's is the East and the West; He guides whoever He pleases to a straight way'.* (*2:142*)**

Similar to this circumstance the words East and West, besides the verse under discussion, have occurred in four other verses of the Qur'an: 2:115, 2:177, 26:28, 73:9. There is a short explanation about their objective meaning when commenting on verse 2:115. The content meaning of these terms refers to the Omnipresence of Allah as the Absolute Reality, the hold of which penetrates the universe in its every part and particle as well as its whole meaning both the rise of the light in the East and its setting in the West are the various aspects of manifestation of Allah's Might and Glory i.e. whichever direction the mind turns there is this aspect of His.

This verse was a decisive clear reasonable answer for those who sought pretext by letting them know that Jerusalem the Ka'bah and all other places belong to Allah, and, intrinsically, Allah has no house and no place; He is the Omnipresent. The main principle here is that we servants should submit to His command and whatever direction He appoints for prayer that direction is sacred and respectable and that direction should be prayed towards. Without His commission, no place has excellence or preference in its own essence.

And the change of the Qiblah, in fact, is one stage of the many different stages of trial and development, each of which is an example of Divine Guidance. It is He Who guides people to the 'Straight Path'.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 143

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُواْ شُهَدَاء عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلاَّ لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّن يَنقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ وَإِن كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلاَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

And thus have We made you an Ummat of middling stand that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger may be (***a***) ***witness over you. We did not make the*** (***former***) ***Qiblah*** (***direction of prayer***) ***towards which you were facing at, except that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels; it was indeed hard except for those whom Allah has guided. Allah would never let your Faith be wasted. Truly Allah is to mankind Most Affectionate, Most Merciful.*** (***2:143***)

Commentary

An Ummat of Middle Standing

In this verse a part of the philosophy and secret of the change of the Qiblah is referred to. At first it says:

And thus have We made you an Ummat of middling stand... (***2:143***)

A nation that is a medium one from any aspect, viz. it is in a state that is neither in excess nor defects and can be brought forth as an example.

But why is the Muslims' Qiblah a middle one? Haply, it is because most of the Christians were living in countries west of their Qiblah. In order to stand towards the direction of the birthplace of Jesus which was located in Jerusalem they had to stand nearly towards the direction of the East. Therefore, the East was considered the direction of their Qiblah. The Jews, who mostly were living in Syria, Babylon and the like, prayed towards Jerusalem which was located nearly in the West for them. Hence, the West was considered the direction of their Qiblah. But, for the Muslims of that time (Muslims in Medina); the Ka'bah was located in the South, between the East and the West which, thereby, was considered a middle ground.

All of those meanings, in fact, are understood from the phrase /wa-ka-dhalika/ 'and thus' stated in the verse. The Qur'an, however, apparently, may intend to refer to the position of all Islamic programs and that not only the Muslims' Qiblah is middle standing but also in all other aspects they have this specialty.

Then, it adds:

...that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger may be (***a***) ***witness over you...*** (***2:143***)

The expression of the Muslims being 'witnesses' over the people of the world, and the Prophet (S) bearing 'witness' over the Muslims may be an insinuation to' being as a model', since witnesses are always chosen from the eligible ones. Thus, the purpose might be that you (Muslims), with these instructions and this creed, are a model nation, as the Prophet (S) is a model among you.

You, by your deeds and behaviour bear witness that a man can be both a man of action and a man of religion while he is living in this very world. He, being sociable, can quite properly protect the limits of his spiritual and moral aspects. Portraying these thoughts and activities, you bear witness that not only there is no contradiction between religion and science, or the present world and the coming world, but they serve one another.

Then, the Qur'an has pointed to one of the secrets of the change of the Qiblah when it says:

***...We did not make the* (*former*) *Qiblah* (*direction of prayer*) *towards which you were facing at, except that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels...* (*2:143*)**

It is interesting that the Qur'an does not say: 'him who follows you' but it says: 'him who follows the Messenger' which confirms the fact that you (Muhammad) are commissioned by the Lord and you are a guide, so, they must be obedient to your command in all things. In this relation, the change of the Qiblah is simple; if the command were beyond that, it should be obeyed and their seeking pretext in it is a sign of their holding on to the customs of the age of paganism and idol worshipping.

The Qur'anic phrase,

***...from him who turns back upon his heels* (*3:144*)**

which originally means 'to turn on one's heel' is a hint to a kind of retrograde manner or retrogression.

***....it was indeed hard except for those whom Allah has guided...* (*2:143*)**

Yes, the soul of absolute submission to the command of Allah will not come to being unless there is Divine Guidance. This is an important matter that one ought to be so submissive that he does not feel in his self even the slightest heaviness for the execution of such commandments; on the contrary, because it is from Allah, he embraces it willingly and eagerly.

Since the seductive enemies or the ignorant friends thought that with the change of the Qiblah our services would become futile and our reward be wasted, at the end of the verse it says:

***...Allah would never let your Faith be wasted. Truly Allah is to mankind Most Affectionate, Most Merciful.* (*2:143*)**

Allah's commandments are issued as prescriptions for the purpose of our remedy; then one day this one

is useful and the next, something else. Each of them in its proper place is the best to provide our felicity, prosperity, and development. Thus, the change of the Qiblah should not create any anxiety for you about your former prayers and worshipping nor those in the future, because all of them have been right and proper.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verse 144

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاء فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

Indeed, We see turning your face (O' Muhammad) to the heavens, and now We shall turn you (in prayer) to a Qiblah that you shall be pleased with. Turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it (for prayer) and those who have been given the (earlier) Book know well that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not at all heedless of what they do. (2:144).

Commentary

Turn Towards the Sacred Mosque

As it was mentioned before, Jerusalem was the first, but temporary, Qiblah of the Muslims. So, as the Prophet (S) was waiting to receive the command from Allah to change the Qiblah, especially after he had migrated to Medina and continued praying towards the same direction, i.e. towards the direction of Jerusalem, the Jews used to very frequently taunt the Muslims at not having a Qiblah of their own and stated that but for the Jews' faith, the Holy Prophet (S) would not even know the direction towards which, by the direction of Allah, he should turn in prayer. Owing to the sneers of the Jews he (S) desired a change and Allah granted it to him. In the above verse this subject is referred to when the command of the Qiblah has been issued to the Prophet (S). It says thus:

Indeed We see turning your face (O' Muhammad) to the heavens and now We shall turn you (in prayer) to a Qiblah that you shall be pleased with. Turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it (for prayer) … (2:144)

According to the Islamic traditions, we know that this change of the Qiblah happened in Medina, at a very sensitive moment when the Prophet (S) was praying the noontime prayer. The bringer of Divine revelation took Muhammad's (S) arm and turned him from the direction of Jerusalem to the direction of the Ka'bah. At the same time Muslims immediately changed their rows, too. It is also said that in that event even the women had to change their place of prayer with the men. (It should be noted that in that occurrence Jerusalem was located approximately towards the North while the direction of the Ka'bah was towards the South.)

It is also noteworthy that the change of the Qiblah had been one of the signs of the Call of the Prophet of Islam (S) written in the former scriptures. The Jews had learnt therein that he (S) would pray towards two directions for his Qiblah.

Therefore, in the above verse, after the command of the Qiblah, it adds:

...and those who have been given the* (*earlier*) *Book know well that it is the truth from their Lord... (***2:144***)

The phrase ***'those who have been given the* (*earlier*) *book'*** means the Jews who through the prophecies in their scriptures[2] already knew that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was a true prophet, thus:

"The Lord, thy God, will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto Me; unto him you shall hearken" Deut. 18/15.

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." Deut. 18/18–19.

Moreover, the Prophet of Islam (S) did not follow the customs of his locale at first, and put aside the Ka'bah which was the center of idols that the Arabs loved very much. He formally accepted the direction of the Qiblah of a limited minority, i.e. Jerusalem. This was, in itself, considered proof of the rightfulness of his invitation and the Divinity of his Call.

At the end of the verse, it adds:

...And Allah is not at all heedless of what they do (***2:144***)

That is, instead of introducing the change of the Qiblah as a sign of his rightfulness, they rejected it and raised a tumult. But Allah is heedless neither of their actions nor of their intentions.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 145

وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُواْ قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُم بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءهُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذاً لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And even if you were to bring every Sign to those who have been given the* (*earlier*) *Book, they would not follow your Qiblah, nor would you be a follower of their Qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's Qiblah. And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you will surely be of the Unjust. (***2:145***)

Commentary

They will Never be Content!

Commenting on the previous verse it was described that the 'People of the Book' knew that the change of the Qiblah from the direction of Jerusalem to the direction of the Sacred Mosque not only was not an objection to the authenticity of the Prophet of Islam (S), but that it was one of the signs of his rightfulness to prophethood, because they had learned through their religious books that the Apostle of Islam (S) would pray towards the directions of two Qiblahs. But their vain religious fanaticism did not let them accept the fact.

In principle, until when a person has not made a decision on a subject yet, by bringing proof, reasons, logic, and miracles for him, he might be made to understand the fact or the fact, itself, might be proved and be manifested to him and consequently, he changes his belief. But, when formerly he has decidedly confirmed his position, especially in the case of a zealous or ignorant person, it is not at all possible to change his mind.

So the Qur'an decisively says:

And even if you were to bring every Sign to those who have been given the* (*earlier*) *Book, they would not follow your Qiblah… (***2:145***)

Therefore, do not tire yourself, for they will never surrender to the truth because the truth-seeking soul has died in them.

Unfortunately, all of the Divine prophets were faced with such persons who were either of the rich puissant ones, or of the deluded and mammonish scholars, or of the ignorant zealous laymen.

Then, it adds:

…nor would you be a follower of their Qiblah… (***2:145***)

That is, if they think that, with their sayings and uproars, the Muslims' Qiblah may change again, they are mistaken. This Qiblah is permanent and it is the final everlasting Qiblah for all Muslims.

This kind of speaking is, in fact, one of the ways of concluding the reproaches of opponents by standing firm and proving that those futile uproars will not change anything.

Then it adds that they are so fanatic in their creed that:

…neither are they the followers of each other's Qiblah… (***2:145***)

Neither would the Jews follow the Christian's Qiblah nor would the Christians follow the Jews' Qiblah.

Then, again for more emphasis, it warns the Prophet (S):

…And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you will surely be of the Unjust. (***2:145***)

Such warnings which are stated in the form of conditional sentences, addressing the Prophet (S) are frequently seen in the Qur'an, the purpose of which is threefold:

The first is that all know that, regarding the law of Allah, there is no difference between the servants of Allah and even the Divine prophets are included under those laws, therefore, if, for the sake of argument, the Holy Prophet (S), too, were to delude from the Truth, he would also be involved with the Lord's punishment, though such a supposition is impossible concerning the prophets ('a) with their Faith and immense knowledge and whose ranks of virtue are known. (And, as it was stated before, a conditional proposition does not necessarily verify the existence of a protasis.)

The second thing is that, taking into consideration the above circumstance, other people would think about their own situations and know that when the Prophet (S) is being warned, then how much more they should be careful about their responsibilities and duties. They must never follow their enemies' perverted desires or give attention to their uproars.

The third aim is to make it clear that the Holy Prophet (S), too, has no right on his own to change anything in Allah's ordinances. It is not so that anyone can collide or come to terms with him, since he is a servant, too, and obedient to His Command.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 146-147

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقاً مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

Those to whom We have given the (***earlier***) ***Book, recognize him*** (***the Prophet***) ***as they recognize their sons, but a group of them most surely conceal the truth while they know*** (***it***). (***2:146***)

الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

The Truth is from your Lord, therefore be not one of the doubters. (***2:147***)

Commentary

Following the former discussions about the obstinacy and bigotry of a party of the People of the Book, the first verse of the above says:

***Those to whom We have given the* (*earlier*) *Book, recognize him* (*the Prophet*) *as they recognize their sons…* (*2:146*)**

They have learnt about his name and his specific characteristics in their religious books.

***…but a group of them most surely conceal the truth while they know* (*it*). (*2:146*)**

Some of them, of course, having seen those clear signs of the promised Prophet (S) embraced Islam. It is quoted from, Abdillah Ibn Salam, who previously had been one of the Jewish scholars and then accepted Islam, that he said that from before, he knew the Prophet of Islam (S) better than he knew his son,3 and the other scholars knew the Prophet of Islam well, too.

This verse uncovers an important fact. It denotes that the earlier Divine Books had contained a very vivid and distinct illustration of the physical and spiritual characteristics of the Prophet of Islam (S). It had been so clear that those who were acquainted with those Books could draw a clear image of him in their minds.

Can anybody imagine that any name or description about the Prophet of Islam's (S) characteristics could not be found mentioned in the Torah and the Evangel? Certainly not, because, as the above verse indicates, the Prophet of Islam (S) was announced openly and very clearly before their eyes by his epithets that were cited in the books of the 'People of the Book'. If this statement were not true, might the scholars of the 'People of the Book' not rise against it? Would they not present their books to him and insist that he should prove his claim thereby according to their Books? Was it possible that even one of their learned men would surrender to the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S) without sufficient cause?

Thus, such verses in the Holy Qur'an are, themselves, clear evidence for them to the rightfulness of the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (S).

Then, to emphasize upon the former statements about the change of the Qiblah or the ordinances of Islam in general, it says:

***The Truth is from your Lord, therefore be not one of the doubters.* (*2:147*).**

The announcement to the Holy Prophet (S) that he, in fact, is the Apostle from Allah sounds to some as a consolation to the Holy Prophet himself (S) so that he would never doubt when the enemies sneered or scorned upon either the change of the Qiblah or about other problems, even if all of them allied with each other against him. As it was mentioned before, any warning or threat addressed to the Holy Prophet (S) is always and invariably meant, not for the Holy Prophet (S), but for his followers. He never doubted in the Divine revelation because the revelation was, for him, on the level of 'certainty of sight'.

1. The of the First Part of the Holy Qur'an ended on the previous page, but verses about the theme of Qiblah in the Qur'an is still continued. Hence, to complete the idea, we had to add some verses of Part 2, here, at the end of this volume.
2. Vide Deut. 18/15 & 18.
3. Al-Manar, Vol. 2 and Al-Tafsir al-Kabir, Fakhr al-Razi, Vol. 4, p. 128.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Section 18 - Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 148 - 154

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 148

وَلِكُلٍّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُواْ الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُواْ يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Everyone has a direction to which he turns, so hasten to precede each other towards all that is good. Wherever you (may) be, Allah will bring you altogether (unto Him); surely Allah is All-Powerful over all things. (2:148)

Commentary

Every Religion has a Qiblah

This verse is, in fact, an answer to the Jews who made a vast uproar about the event of the change of Qiblah. It says:

Everyone has a direction to which he turns... (2:148)

There had been different directions of the Qiblah during the history of prophets. The change of the direction of a Qiblah is not a strange thing, because it is not like the principles of the religion which are permanent, nor is it similar to Divine affairs which are impossible to interfere in, Therefore, do not make such a big deal about the Qiblah,

...so hasten to precede each other towards all that is good... (2:148)

Instead of spending all your time on talking about this minor subject, you had better pay attention to doing good deeds and having pure intentions which have a broad racing field where you can challenge to precede each other, because the criterion of the value of your existence is your pure good actions.

This meaning is just like what is stated in verse 177 of the current Surah:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is that one should have faith in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Apostles... (***2:177***)

If you want to examine Islam or Muslims, you can utilize this criterion for analysis, not the problem of the change of the Qiblah.

Then, as warning to the objectors and encouraging the good-doers, it says:

...Wherever you (***may***) ***be, Allah will bring you altogether*** (***unto Him***)***...*** (***2:148***)

in the Great Court of the Hereafter which is the final stage of reward and punishment.

It is not such that some be busy doing righteous works and some others do not do anything but destruction and spend their time spoiling others' deeds and, yet these two groups be treated equally without having any reckoning or any recompense.

The idea may seem surprising for some people that how it is possible that Allah gathers the particles of the scattered dusts of men wherever they may be, and brings them into a new life, then, it immediately says:

...surely Allah is All-Powerful over all things. (***2:148***)

Indeed, the existence of this statement at the end of the verse is evidence for the statement preceding it, which says:

...Wherever you (***may***) ***be, Allah will bring you altogether*** (***unto Him***)***...*** (***2:148***)

Explanation: The Day When Imam Mahdi's ('A) Adherents Assemble

According to numerous traditions narrated from the holy Ahl al-Bayt ('a) cited in Islamic literature, the expression:

...Wherever you (***may***) ***be, Allah will bring you altogether*** (***unto Him***) ***...*** (***2:148***)

has been rendered into the adherents of Imam al-Mahdi, the twelfth Imam ('a).

It is quoted in '*Rauqat al-Kafi'* from Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a) who, after mentioning this expression, said: *"It means the adherents of Imam al-Qa'im ('a) who consist of three hundred and thirteen men. By Allah, they are the objective meaning of the phrase / ummat al-ma'dudah /. By Allah, they all will gather together at the same time like the autumnal wind-driven broken clouds that become cumulus."*[1]

It is also narrated from 'Ali Ibn Mosa-ar-Ridha', the eighth Imam ('a), who has said: *"By Allah, when al-*

Mahdi (‘a) rises, Allah will gather all our followers from all cities unto him.”[2]

There is no doubt that this is one of the deep innate meanings of the verse. Based on Islamic traditions, we know that there are layers upon layers of meaning concerning the verses of the Qur’an. One of them is the apparent meaning which is universal and general; and others, which are the deeply hidden ones which none knows except the Prophet (S), the sinless Imams (‘a), and those whom Allah wills.

In other words, these traditions refer to this very meaning that the Creator, Who is able to gather the particles of the scattered dusts of men from different parts of the world, can easily bring the adherents of al-Mahdi (‘a) on one day and at one time together to strike the first spark of the establishment of the revolution for the settlement of the godly government in order to put an end to tyranny and transgression, and establish Divine Justice among people throughout the world.

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verses 149-150

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

And from whatever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. Indeed, this is the truth from your Lord. And Allah is not at all heedless of what you do. (***2:149***).

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلاَّ يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ فَلاَ تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

And from whatever place you come forth, turn your face (***in prayer***) ***towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no dispute against you, save those of them that are unjust. Have no awe of them but stand in awe of Me; and that I may Perfect My blessing upon you, and so that you might be guided*** (***aright***). (***2:150***).

Commentary

In the previous verse where the direction of the Sacred Mosque is referred to, it concerns Medina, the city where most Muslims inhabited at that time. But, in the first of the above verses, the meaning is more general, and it says that from wherever you come forth and set out for travelling, turn your face towards the Ka’bah in prayer.

And from whatever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque… (***2:149***)

Here are some points and messages that can be noted:

1. In numerous verses of the Qur’an, the subject of the Qiblah and turning towards it is repeated and

emphasized. These repetitions are not undue. Through every one of these verses, besides the proposition of the Qiblah, a new point is propounded. In the current Surah,[3] after commissioning the Prophet (S) and the Muslims to turn their faces towards the Qiblah, the Sacred Mosque, it says:

***…and those who have been given the* (*earlier*) *Book know well that it is the truth from their Lord…* (*2:149*)**

because they had learnt from their religious books that the Prophet of Islam (S) would pray towards two Qiblahs, so,

***…We shall turn you* (*in prayer*) *to a Qiblah that you shall be pleased with…* (*2:144*)**

in order to fulfil the prophecy which was given to the 'People of the Book' cited in their Book which they were expecting.

Here, the subject is emphasized again, thus:

***…Indeed, this is the truth from your Lord…* (*2:149*).**

In the next verse, there is another reason mentioned for these reiterations which will be referred to in the following.

2. Whenever a new subject is proposed, the matter should necessarily be reiterated to be renewed and settled in the minds and hearts of people. It is narrated in a tradition that the first phrase in the prayer call (i.e. Allahu Akbar) is repeated four times in order that people be prepared and receptive, but the phrases following that are repeated only two times, because people's attention has already been attracted by the proclamation of the call to prayer.

The Lord warns those who disobey His Command, saying:

***…And Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.* (*2:74*)**

In the second of the above verses, too, immediately after the ordinance of turning the face towards the Sacred Mosque, the Lord says:

***…so that people shall have no dispute against you…* (*2:150*)**

As it was formerly pointed out, the' People of the Book' knew that the Prophet of Islam (S) would pray towards two Qiblahs, so, if that had not come to pass, they would have questioned or objected that the Prophet (S) lacked the qualities mentioned in the earlier heavenly Books, or they would have sneered and despised the Muslims accusing them that they, who had not an independent Qiblah for their own, were the followers of the Jewish Qiblah. This objection was not, of course, only from the side of the Jews, but the pagans also assisted them in their ridicules, criticizing: 'Why does not Muhammad respect the Ka'bah, the Holy House built by Abraham and Ismail ('a), exclusively for the prayer to God and does

yield towards the religious centre of the Jews?' The hypocrites, too, were busy objecting to the change of the Qiblah. They said that the Prophet (S) was not firm in his decision.

However, this verse, with emphasis and repetition, prepares the Muslims for acceptance and perseverance. It informs them that those people who accept proof and reasons will not object to you, but those who are wrong doers and unjustly conceal the truth will not stop seeking pretexts.

…so that people shall have no dispute against you, save those of them that are unjust… (***2:150***)

Therefore, you should neither give heed to them nor be afraid of them. You should fear only Allah.

…Have no awe of them, but stand in awe of Me… (***2:150***)

Another point which is noteworthy, here, is that the Qiblah is the symbol of Monotheism. The Qiblah, the direction of prayer, is the emblem of the Muslims. In Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 173, the Qiblah is referred to as 'a clear sign, or a distinguishing flag'. Idol worshippers and star worshippers, when worshipping, turned towards idols or stars or the moon. Instead of those misguided directions, Islam introduced the Ka'bah as the Qiblah for Muslims. Thus, turning towards the Sacred Mosque is considered a sign of being mindful of the Lord. Some traditions indicate that the Prophet of Islam (S) usually sat towards the direction of the Qiblah. We are even advised by the Holy Ahl al-Bayt ('a) to lie, to sleep and to sit down towards that direction. This action has been counted as a form of worship. There are some special obligatory ordinances on observing the Qiblah while performing certain ritual actions. For instance, slaughtering animals to be used for food, burial of a Muslim corpse in the grave, and establishing the obligatory prayers should be done towards the Qiblah. Elimination of bodily wastes while facing or with one's back to the Qiblah is unlawful.

In addition to what was said in the above, the Qiblah is the sign and the factor of uniting Muslims. If we look from above the earth down at the Muslims of the world, we see that they turn towards the Qiblah at least five times a day with special regularity and in a particular order.

Throughout history, the Ka'bah has been the center point of the godly movements and revolutions, including that of Abraham ('a), Prophet Muhammad (S), up to Imam Husayn's ('a); and in the future, Imam Mahdi (May Allah hasten his advent) will start his blessed movement from the site of the Ka'bah. Then, we conclude that:

1. The Ka'bah is the Qiblah of Muslims, all of whom, wherever they be, are commissioned to turn towards it when they stand praying.

And from whatever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. Indeed, this is the truth from your Lord. And Allah is not at all heedless of what you do. (***2:149***)

2. Muslims should avoid doing anything that causes their enemies to seek pretext.

…so that people shall have no dispute against you… (***2:150***)

3. Independence is a ‘value’ while tolerating flattery is a disgrace.

4. The change of the Qiblah is the fulfilment of the conditions and qualities promised in the earlier Divine Books.

5. The change of the Qiblah was a factor to nullify the vain objections and pretexts of the ‘People of the Book’, pagans, and hypocrites.

6. It is not right to be silent when there is injustice:

…save those of them that are unjust… (***2:150***)

7. Foreign enemies cannot be the greatest danger for the Muslims, while impiety and having no awe of Allah is the real danger.

8. Appointing an independent Qiblah for the Muslims was to prepare the perfection of Allah’s blessing upon them.

…and that I may Perfect my blessing upon you… (***2:150***)

…and so that you might be guided (***aright***)***…*** (***2:150***)

9. Appointing an independent Qiblah for Muslims’ prayers towards the Sacred Mosque is a process for the guidance of believers.

Surah Al-Baqarah – Verses 151-152

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُواْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Even as We have sent among you a Messenger of your own who recites Our revelations to you that purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know. (***2:151***).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُواْ لِي وَلاَ تَكْفُرُونِ

Therefore, remember Me, and I will remember you; and be thankful to Me, and be you not ungrateful. (***2:152***)

Commentary

The subject matter of the first verse is the Messengership of the Prophet of Islam (S) which was in answer to the invocation of Abraham ('a) who had asked:

Our Lord, send amongst them an Apostle of their own who shall recite unto them Your revelations... (***2:129***)

Besides, that the Prophet of Islam (S) also repeatedly said:

I am (***the fruit of***) ***the very acceptance of my father's invocation, Abraham***[4] (***2:129***)

Thus, Allah sent a prophet to the people from among themselves who were familiar with their demands, needs, and wishes. He used to communicate with them through their own language, and he lived amongst them.

Even as We have sent among you a Messenger of your own who recites Our revelations to you that purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know. (***2:151***)

Through the second verse, Allah has promoted the rank of Man by saying that He and we remember each other.

Therefore, remember Me, and I will remember you... (***2:152***)

The level and standard of knowledge and understanding of people is different, so, Allah tells a group of servants:

...Remember Allah's favour on you... (***3:103***)

while he addresses some others of them thus:

...remember Me... (***2:152***)

as in the current verse. The remembrance of Allah is a prerequisite to being thankful to Him, hence, it has preceded the term thankfulness. This is an illustration of the consideration of Allah*'s* honour for Man as a reflection of His Grace unto His servants. On one end of this scale, there is Man with his ignorance, poverty, mortality, and feebleness, while on the other end, there is Allah, the All-Knowing, the All-Sufficient, the Eternal, and the All-Mighty Who wants him to remember Him in order to show his gratitude for the great blessings of the Qiblah and the Messenger of Islam, and He promises to remember him, too. This very remembrance is also a favour from Allah bestowed upon His servants.

No doubt, if a person neglects Allah in life, He, of course, will be heedless towards him, too.

…and be thankful to Me, and be you not ungrateful. (***2:152***)

Explanation

Here, your attention is attracted to the following descriptions and messages derived from the above verses:

1. The recitation of Divine revelations, the purification of receptive souls, the instruction of the Book and Wisdom, and teaching of people what they do not know, are among the duties of prophets.

2. That leader is successful who is from amongst the people themselves, because he is acquainted with their problems and speaks the same language as theirs.

…a Messenger of your own who recites Our revelation to you… (***2:151***)

3. Human beings are not able to solve all their scientific problems by themselves. That is why He did not say in the verse / malata'lamun / '(He teaches you) what you do not know', but He said: / malamtakunu ta'lamon / '(He teaches you) that which you did not know' in order to remind us that if the prophets ('a) had not existed, Man could never have found the answers to many of his problems. For example, he could not have found out what his future (the next world) will be, or, he could not recognize which path was the true path of felicity and salvation.

4. Prophets were not merely the teachers and leaders of ethics and theology, but they were also the instructors of science. Without their leadership in science, human knowledge would have remained undeveloped in all fields.

…and teaches you that which you did not know. (***2:151***)

5. The remembrance of Allah is not only the cause for the Grace of Allah, but with the remembrance of Allah the hearts will gain peace and rest. Surah Ar-Ra'd says:

…Certainly! By Allah's remembrance are the hearts at rest. (***13:28***)

6. Establishing prayer is the best way to remember Allah, as in Surah Taha, Allah Himself says:

…keep up prayer for My remembrance… (***20:14***)

Surah Al-Baqarah - Verse 153

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اسْتَعِينُواْ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلاَةِ إِنَّ اللّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

O' you who have Faith! seek you help (***from Allah***) ***through patience and prayer, verily Allah is with the patient ones*** (***in the time of adversity***). (***2:153***)

The phrase / ya ayyuha alladhina amanu / ***O' you who have Faith!*** addresses all those who have Faith entirely, foremost of whom Hadrat Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) and the rest of the immaculate Imams are distinguished. This idea is expressed in many Islamic narrations; for instance, it is quoted from Ibn Abbas narrating from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: *"No revelation containing' O' you who have faith' was sent down except that 'Ali is at its top and is its chief."*[5]

Again, it is narrated from 'Akramah who narrates from Ibn Abbas that has said: *"Allah has sent down no verse in the Qur'an consisting of 'O' you who have faith' but 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) is the leader of it and the chief of it".*[6]

Of course, the more complete and the higher the degree of Faith is, the content of the verse about it is clearer and more apparent.

(This phrase has also been discussed more comprehensively when commenting on Surah al-Baqarah, 2:104).

The phrase / wasta'inu / ***seek you help from Allah*** is a guiding imperative phrase because at every moment and in all affairs a mortal is in need of Allah*'s* help, whether it is something which is inside his free will, because he is not an absolutely independent subject, though he is created free in will; or it is something which is outside of his will. Man is in complete need of Him (SWT) and he should constantly invocate for everything and seek help from the Lord.

A person most naturally and reasonably can be qualified for the special blessings from God. If this verse is to be taken as referring to the conquest of Mecca, even then it holds good, if it means to say that the people must prove their worthiness or value to the Truth in Islam by bearing the hardest trials with constant prayers to the Lord; for prayer suggests the praying individual's acknowledgment of God's Omnipotence and the individual's confidence in God being the All-Merciful one, as the only One who can grant the prayers of the sincere supplicants.

Real Faith can never be mere empty words. It must express or manifest itself through patience or endurance in all that befalls the individual to show his faithfulness to God, and the help from God must be sought through prayers or supplications to the Lord.

The aid of Allah requires eligibility. This eligibility is confirmed by two things:

The first is having ***patience*** in worldly hardships and perseverance in bearing its bitter circumstances. And also having patience in tolerating the hardship of performing Divine services, and obtaining knowledge and good ethics, patience in withholding one's self from lusts and the fleeting pleasure of committing sins and yielding to low desires, is necessary. This bitterness of hardship, which is short in time, finally results in a sweet fruit which lasts a long time. Concerning the epithets of the true believers, Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) has said: *"The short period of patience resulted in a long period of tranquility for them."*[7]

The term / sabr / ‘ patience’, in this verse, is rendered into ‘fasting’ and ‘holy war’.

The second thing is ‘*prayer’* which is the highest means of turning towards and approaching Allah by which we may seek help and aid from that Origin of favour and Grace.

Some commentators have rendered the term / salat / into ‘supplication’ whose explanation demands a separate chapter.

Some others, based on some Islamic traditions, have interpreted it into the ‘obligatory prayers’ and ‘supererogatory prayers’. For example: it is cited in *Tafsir ‘Ayyashi* narrated from Fudayl from Imam al–Baqir (‘a) who said: *“O’ Fudayl, convey our salam* (*regards*) *to our followers whom you visit and tell them I say that I avail you aught* (*in keeping you far*) *from the punishment of Allah save by piety. Then, they must control their tongues and be careful of their hands. They should be attentive to patience and prayer. Verily Allah is with the patient ones.”*[8]

The first part of the verse has also occurred in verse 45, the explanation of which can be referred to on pages 169 and 170.

The objective meaning of the phrase ***‘Allah is with the patient ones’*** is that His help, assistance, guidance, success, favours, the protection from pests, the perfection of intentions, as well as His other blessings are showered upon the patient by Him.

Above all of the aforementioned bounties, there is the reward of Allah granted to the patient believers in the Hereafter about whom He says:

…Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure! (***39: 10***)

Surah Al–Baqarah – Verse 154

وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاء وَلَكِن لاَّ تَشْعُرُونَ

And do not say of those who are slain in Allah’s way: ‘They are dead.’ Nay (***they are***) ***alive, but you perceive*** (***it***) ***not.*** (***2: 154***)

Commentary

The Qur’anic phrase

…of those who are slain in Allah’s way (***2: 154***)

refers to those who are slain (i.e. martyred) in the battles led by the Prophet (S) or Imams (‘a) or one of their specific deputies, as well as anyone who is martyred on the path of Islam and propagation of the

religion of Allah. The content of the verse is inclusive of not only all who are slain in the path of Allah such as: the immaculate Imams (‘a) their ministers, Muslim scholars and believers, although the occasion of revelation of the verse is reported that it was revealed about the Muslims who were martyred in the battle of Badr, but also anyone other than them.

And do not say of those who are slain in Allah’s way: ‘They are dead…’ **(*2:154*)**

The phenomenon of martyrdom is more clearly described in Surah Aali Imran, 3:169 and 3:170 which gives further information about the truth that those who surrender or sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah. (i.e. the martyrs) are alive receiving their sustenance from their Lord.

And reckon not those who are killed in Allah’s way as dead; nay they are alive **(*and*)** ***are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace.*** **(*3:169*)**.

The term /shahid/ ‘martyred’ used in many occurrences in the Qur’an refers to this blissful state of realization.

Therefore, this stage of life, i.e. the life immediately after death, i.e. the purgatory life, is not allocated to martyrs alone, though the verse is about them, but it envelops all people because stating something does not mean that the unstated, but applicable, instances are not involved. For example, when we say, this man is just’, it does not mean that justice belongs to him exclusively and there is not any other just person; while there may be thousands of people who are just.

Thus, this verse, here, confirms the purgatorial life for the martyrs. This life, the intermediate state, according to many verses of the Qur’an and abundant Islamic traditions, exists for all believers and nonbelievers both, with a distinction. The soul of a believer, after departing from its physical body, will settle in a body similar to this one and will be sustained in that world until when the Hereafter comes forth; while the soul of a nonbeliever, during the time when passing this course, will be in torment, as the Qur’an says:

(*In falsehood will they be*) *until when death comes to one of them, he says: ‘O’ my Lord! send me back* (*to life*)*’* (*23:99*)

In order that I may work righteously in the things I neglected. ‘By no means! It is but a word he says’. Before them is a partition till the Day they are raised up. **(*23:100*)**

It is narrated from Yunus Ibn Tibyan who said he was sitting with Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) when he was explaining about the believers’ souls and he (‘a) said: *“O’ Yunus! When Allah gets the soul of a believer taken, He puts his soul in a setting like his body that was in this world. So, they eat and drink and when a comer enters he recognizes them in the same form as they were in the world.”*[9]

Also, Abu-Basir narrates from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) who, about the believers’ souls, said: *“*(*They will be*) *in Heaven with the same features as their* (*worldly*) *bodies were so that if you see him* (*one of them*) *you*

will surely recognize him and say who he is."[10]

Then the Qur'an continues saying:

***...Nay,* (*they are*) *alive...* (*2:154*)**

Life is divided into four sorts: the plant-life, the animal-life, the human-life, and the Faith-life.

Plant-life is the power of growth which is common among plants and animals including human beings. The death of this particular life is when that power stops. Animal-life is the power by which feeling and conscious movement comes to being. Human beings and animals have this life in common. It dies when this power ceases.

Human-life is the faculty of general reasoning and perceiving by which Man is distinguished from animal. This phenomenon emerges because of that abstract and rational soul which administrates this body. Its death causes the interruption of this administration and breaking off its connection with the body but there is no destruction for it and it remains to return to the body again when the Resurrection occurs. So, this purgatorial state exists not only for martyrs or Muslims, but for the soul of every conscious being.

Faith-Life is the peace of mind, assurance of self, and clearness of heart all of which come into existence for a believer through Faith and knowing Allah. It is in this state that he can live in rest and tranquility with joy and pleasure because the toils, hardships, and miseries of this world would not create any awe, worry, anxiety or instability for him. This very condition originates from his reliance and belief in Providence, Who gives only goodness.

This life is the same as the 'good life', about which the Lord says:

***Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.* (*16:97*)**

And, the Qur'an also says:

***O' you who have Faith! give your response to Allah and His Apostle, when He calleth you to that which will give you life...* (*8:24*)**

It is said that the utterances in a language indicate meanings so that letter and spirit correspond with each other. For example, the term 'light or lamp' is applied to any means which is used in darkness to get brightness from. Then, whatever has this function, the application of that term for it is correct, although the substance is different from the point of material, form and other qualities.

Life is a general sense which is recognized by the appearance of the effects which are expected from it.

In this sense, the term' life' is used for the Essence of Allah, too. The example of this idea is recited in Surah Aali Imran, which says:

Allah! There is no god but He, the living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. (***3:2***)

That is, the Essence from Whom the effects of knowledge and power are clear and manifest. That is why some scholars said that Allah*'s* life is His very Knowledge and Power. Of course, the Essence of the Knower and the Mighty is alive. Therefore, wherever the effects of this meaning exist, the application of this utterance is correct, but it are not necessary that its kind and its characteristics and properties, which are appropriate to those particular situations, be the same everywhere and in all circumstances. Hence, the life in Purgatory, from the point of quality for martyrs and other people, is of the quality of the same world. It is for this reason that the people of this world with their senses, the quality of the nature of which is of the quality of this world, cannot perceive that which is of the quality of the nature of that world.

...but you perceive it not. (***2:153***)

By the way, this verse clears the doubt of materialist and pagans who believe that with death, man's life becomes extinct, i.e. there is no life after death. Here, the Qur'an warns all, Muslim or non-Muslim, that **man's life does not perish after death, but it does remain**.

So, with this in mind, we realize that there is nothing more valuable or worthwhile than the time spent striving for the perfection of such a life. May Allah help us all to follow His Ordinances that He so graciously made available to us by way of the Qur'an in order that we might experience success in this life and in the Hereafter.

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1. Raudat al-Kafi, Vol. 8, p. 313, Tradition 478.
2. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 231.
3. Refer to Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:144.
4. Al-Amili, by Shaykh Tusi, p. 379.
5. Tafsir al-Furat al-Kufi, p. 49, Tradition 7.
6. Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 167.
7. Bihar-al-Anwar, Vol. 68, p. 113, Tradition 48.
8. Bihar-al-Anwar, Vol. 82, p. 232.
9. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 236.
10. Majma' al-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 236.

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