

36. Concerning the interpretation of the verse

42:43

Concerning the interpretation of the verse:

Say (O Muhammad, Unto Mankind): "I Ask You No Requitul Thereof"

Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, says that Allah, the Exalted, has ordained a requital for His Prophet, may the blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny, for his apostleship and guidance of mankind's devotion to his Ahlu 'l-Bayt, peace be upon them. Then, he adduces in evidence of this the speech of Allah:

Say (O Muhammad, unto mankind): "I ask you no requital for this, save loving-kindness towards (my) kinsfolk" [42:23].

ash-Shaykh al-Mufid, may Allah have mercy upon him, comments that it is not true that Allah, the Exalted, has made the requital of His Prophet men's devotion to his Ahlu 'l-Bayt, peace be upon them, nor that He made this a part of his reward. For the reward of the Prophet, may the blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny, for his devotion to Him is perpetual grace. It is this with which Allah, the Exalted, out of His justice, generosity and bounty, has bound Himself to recompense him. For the rewarding of a deed is not owed to men as the act should be devoted sincerely to Allah alone, and that which is Allah's is to be rewarded from Allah alone, and none save Him. Further, Allah, the Exalted, says:

"And, O my people! I do not ask of you wealth for this; my wage rests with Allah alone" [11:29].

He also says:

"O my people! I do not ask of you a wage for this; my wage falls only upon Him Who did originate me" [ibid.:51].

Then, if the requital was in accordance with what Abu Ja'far presumed about the meaning of the verse,

then the Qur'an would have contradicted itself, since the verse would have to be rendered like this – 'I do not ask you a wage, but I do ask of you a wage'. And also – 'My wage is with Allah alone, but rather my wage is with Allah as well as with others than Him'. And this is impossible since the text of the Qur'an cannot bear this meaning.

If then, it happened that someone said: "Then what is the meaning of 'I do not ask of you a wage for this, save loving-kindness towards (my) kinsfolk'? Does it not mean that He asked of them devotion towards his Prophet's progeny in return for what he has done for them?", then we would have to say that the facts are now what you have presumed them to be; since the proof of reason and of the Qur'an refute it, as we demonstrated above.

The exceptive (istithna') in this particular place is not part of the main sentence because it refers to something distinct from the main clause; 'I do not ask of you a return for this, but I ask and oblige you to show devotion towards kinsfolk'. Then His speech, "I do not ask of you a return for this", is an independent sentence complete in itself; while His speech (only I demand of you) "loving-kindness towards kinsfolk" forms a new sentence signifying, "but I do ask of you devotion to (my) kinsfolk". This is similar to His saying:

Then the angels bowed themselves all together, save Iblis [15:30-31],

which means, "whereas Iblis (did not)"; hence it is not an exceptive clause dependent on the preceding. And His saying:

They are an enemy to me, except the Lord of all beings [26:77], which means, 'but the Lord of all beings is not an enemy of mine'.

The poet says:

A land in which there is no companion, but the gazelles and the piebald camels. Then the meaning of his verse, 'A land in which there is no companion', is a self-sufficient sentence, complete in itself, while the verse, 'but the gazelles . . .' being a new sentence, means 'but there are gazelles and piebald camels in it'. This is clear and has no obscurity for anyone with any knowledge of language, and it is too well-known to linguists to require elucidation.

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