

## Section 13

### Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 114

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

**114. "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."**

#### 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 Turah. 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 al-Sadiq (as) 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.

## 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 luster 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?....."***

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..."***

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 kind of actions will never truly 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. "***

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 lusterless.

As it will be explained when commenting on **Surah Al-Taubah, No.9, verse 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**

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

**115. "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."***

## **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, every one 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.

## **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..."***

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."***

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,"*** (Surah A'raf. No.7. verse 137).

## **Philosophy of the Qiblah**

The first question that arises here is that if ***' wherever we turn, there is the Presence of Allah'***, 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 'Was-a'il-ush-Shi'ah', Kit-ab-us-Sal-at' and, Abw-ab-ul-Qiblah'.)

Here, we attract your attention to three authentic traditions about the term / wajhullah/ and its meaning:

1. It is cited in the book 'Al-Tauhid ' from Salman Farsi, through a tradition known as Jathliq, who asked Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) some questions which were comprehensively replied to. One of them was that he asked him (as) which direction his Lord's presence was.

Hadrat Ali (as) told Ibn Abbas to have some firewood fetched for him. The firewood was brought and was kindled. When the fire was flaming, Hadrat Ali (as) 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 (as) 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-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) who said that the manifestation of Allah (s.w.t.) is Ahlul Bayt (as) 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 Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), 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-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) who said:

*"O! 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 Biharul-Anwar, vol. 93, p. 228, which can be referred to, too.

[1.](#) Asbab-un-Nuzul, p. 22, Arabic version

[2.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 189

[3.](#) Ibid

[4.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 189 & Al-mizan, the of the verse.

[5.](#) Tafsir Fakhr-i-Razi, vol. 4, p. 9

[6.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 191

[7.](#) Manhaj-us- Sadiqin, vol. 1, p. 348, & Abulfutuh-Razi; vol. 1, p. 302

[8.](#) Tafsir-ut- Tibyan, vol. 1, p. 424 & Tafsir Nimunah, vol. 1, p. 413

[9.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar vol. 25, p. 168

[10.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 93, p. 118, & Al-Ihtijaj by Tabarsi

[11.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 23, p. 102, Tradition 1

[12.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar vol. 25, p. 168

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