

Section 19, Surah Al-Baqarah, Chapter 2

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 155-157

Note: Part 2 of the Qur'an begins from verse 142 in Surah Al-Baqarah, and the commentary of its beginning verses were added to the previous volume in order to give the exegesis of the verses concerning the theme of Qiblah together. Now, this volume begins from verse no. 155 added to those verses of part 2.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ
وَيَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

155. **"And We will surely test you (all) with something of fear and hunger and loss of property, lives and fruits; but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient."**

156. **"Who, when a calamity befalls them, (by showing perseverance), say: 'Verily we belong to Allah, and certainly unto Him shall we return!'"**

157. **"Those are they on whom are blessings and Mercy from their Lord, and they are the ones that are guided (aright)."**

Trial, an Indisputable Divine Rule

Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said: *"Even though Allah, the Glorious, knows them more than they know themselves, yet He does so to let them perform actions with which they earn reward or punishment."* 1

Concerning the sense of trial, in a sermon, he (as) also has remarked:

"...Certainly, Allah tries His servants in respect of evil actions by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and closing treasures of good, so that he who wishes to repent may repent, he who wishes to recall (forgotten good) may recall, and he who wishes to abstain (from evil) may abstain...." 2

Allah (s.w.t.) tests all human beings, but with varieties. All the different sites of the world are the testing-places, and all the members of humanity, even the prophets, are under trial, and all the pleasant and unpleasant things are the means of trial.

We ought to know that the Divine examinations are not done in order to clear out the ambiguity, but they are to evoke and train the capacities and abilities of humankind.

The means of this trial are all bitter and sweet happenings of Man, including: fear, hunger, loss of property, lives, agricultural products, fear from enemies, economic siege, and taking part in Holy War himself, or by sending children and dear ones to the battle of war.

These trials were experienced in the first war of Islam (battle of Badr), and will also come forth at the time of the reappearance of the Expected Mahdi, the twelfth Imam (May *Allah* hasten his glad advent), for which Muslims should be prepared.

The inflictions, which human beings encounter with, are usually concerned with wealth, life, children, or the fear of the loss of either of them.

The secret of mentioning 'fear', among the means of trials, first, may be that the purpose is the fear for the lack of either of those three things. It is always before the loss of the very things that one fears of losing them.

Then, next to fear, hunger is pointed out, which comes into being as a result of poverty. Yet, in this respect, fasting is counted one of the examples of hunger.

Loss of property has been situated in the third degree. The loss of wealth, of course, is very bitter, especially for a rich person when he becomes poor. Then there comes the loss of life, which often occurs because of different ailments or after being wounded: in a battle-field and Holy War in the way of *Allah*, and so on.

And, finally, the loss of fruits comes forth. Some of the commentators have rendered this loss into the

death of one's child, which is the heaviest calamity.

"...but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient."

It addresses the prophet of Islam (S) that he gives glad tidings to those people who persevere with patience in their calamities and difficulties.

Some commentators have said that this 'glad tidings' points to the reward of Heaven and the merit of Divine forgiveness for them, as Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said: *"Allah, Mighty and Glorious, said: '...but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient', or, (that is), with Paradise and forgiveness."* 3

But in another tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (as) has rendered the concept of 'glad tidings' into the reappearance of Imam Al-Mahdi (as), where he says:

"Before the rise of Qa'im (Al-Mahdi) (May Allah hasten his auspicious reappearance) there will appear some signs by which Allah tries the Muslim believers."

Muhammad-ibn-Muslim, (who was one of the special followers of the Imam), said that he required to know what those signs were; and he (as) answered: *"Those are the same that Allah, the Glorious, has expressed in the Qur'an, thus:*

'And We will surely test you (all) with something of fear and hunger and loss of property, lives and fruits;'

So far as he (as) recited: *'...but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient'*, and continued to say: *'This means to give glad tidings to the believers who show patience and perseverance in these calamities for the advent of the Qa'im (as), (viz., Hadrat Mahdi May Allah (s.w.t.) hasten his glad advent.)'* 4

Yes, the world is anxiously awaiting the advent of this great reformer (as). When he comes, he will fill the world full of justice. Then, there will be no inequity, no cruelty, and no transgression. *Allah* will open the doors of blessings out of the earth and heaven because of his auspicious appearance. At that time, the believing people can continue to live peacefully and easily under his esteemed government, to prove their worship and servitude to *Allah*.

Concerning this meaning, in a tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) has said: *"Al-Mahdi is mine. His luminous forehead is high and wide, while over whose nose there is a little projection. He will fill the earth with justice, just as it is filled up with aggression and cruelty."* 5

"Who, when a calamity befalls them, (by showing perseverance), say: 'Verily we belong to Allah, and certainly unto Him shall we return!'"

After recounting different calamities, and giving glad tidings to the patient, it introduces this group of

patient who, with this competency, rightfully deserve to be given glad tidings, It is clear that every ordinary person is not fit to be rewarded with all these excellences and dignities.

Hence, that reward, i.e. the glad tidings, is specialized to the ones whose patience originates from a firm foundation. This particular glad tiding is qualified by a special blessing and Mercy from the side of *Allah*. These kinds of people are those ones whose hearts turn to their Lord at the moment of meeting with a calamity when, they say:

'... Verily we belong to Allah, and certainly unto Him shall we return!'

They treat such because they have realized, through knowledge of certainty or by visual certainty, that whatever exists belongs to *Allah* and is under His Will. So, whatsoever He has given to human-kind in this world, such as: soul, property, children, and all other similar respects, are fictitious.

They also know that whatever *Allah* has bestowed upon them has been based upon His Wisdom, and when He takes it from them, it is not taken because of miserliness, but it is for His good that He takes a blessing from a person to mercifully impart a better one. They have found out that their return, their destination, as well as the return of everything, is undoubtedly unto Him.

However, he who, based on these foundations, knows and remembers that his soul, wealth, and whatever he possesses belongs to *Allah* and is under His Authority, surrenders to His divine decrees. The one, with this awareness, will be patient and thankful properly and reasonably. Such a person, of course, is one of those eligible believers for whom *Allah* says:

"Those are they on whom are blessings and Mercy from their Lord..", and they are prosperous.

Some of the commentators have said that / salawat / (blessings and peace), which comes from *Allah* (*s.w.t.*), is the same as 'forgiveness', while some others believe that it is 'praise'.

The term / salawat / (blessings) is said in the plural form because it refers to the abundant mercy of *Allah*. It may mean that there are many frequent blessings for these steadfast patient from *Allah* which do not cease.

It is narrated from the Prophet (S) who said: *"The person who receives a calamity and thereafter, whenever the one remembers it, utters the phrase 'Verily we belong to Allah, and certainly unto Him shall we return', Allah gives the believer once again the reward of the day when the one received that calamity". (Even though there has passed a long time after that calamity).* 6

He (S) has also said in another tradition that, for such a person, *Allah* will amend that calamity with a better quality than before and his destiny will conclude well. 7

"...and they are the ones that are guided (aright)."

This group of the patient, as was mentioned in the above, when they entangle with a calamity, are patiently steadfast, since they have known that they themselves and what they have are all *Allah's* and in His possession.

They also know that their return is unto Him, and they express this fact, too, by their tongue and with uttering the above holy phrase. Such people have attained the rank and position of nearness to *Allah*. Their march is gain after gain, i.e. an ever progressive gain. They are, in fact, guided aright.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 158

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ

158. "Behold, Safa and Marwah are among the Symbols (appointed by) Allah; so whoever makes the pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House, or Performs 'Umrah, therefore it is no blame on him to go round them both. And for whoever (obeys Him and) initiates good, then verily Allah is Grateful, All-Knowing."

Occasion of Revelation

Running between Safa and Marwah, is obligatory with the Shi'ah, the followers of Ahlul-Bayt (as), and it is one of the main actions in both greater pilgrimage (Hajj) and lesser pilgrimage ('Umrah).

But, at the beginning of Islam, those Muslims were not willing to perform it because they had imagined that there had been something wrong in it, for, at the Age of ignorance, there had been an idol in Safa called: 'Usaf, and another in Marwah named: Na'ilah, which pagans used to touch both while running therein.

So, this very verse was revealed to make the Muslims free from that false imagination. This very meaning is cited in At-Tibyan fi Tafsir-il-Qur'an, narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) 8 The idea is also cited with more details in Majma'-ul-Bayan, narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as). It begins thus:

"Muslims had usually seen some signs of innovation from the pagans of pre Islamic era of Ignorance, (so they disliked to circumambulate them). Then, Allah sent this verse down (to remove that aversion)." 9

The expansion of this description is thus that before the advent of Islam and also at the time of revelation some pagans and idol-worshippers used to go to Mecca to make Hajj pilgrimage with a particular form which was common at that time.

Their fulfillment of Hajj pilgrimage was principally originated from Prophet Ebrahim (Abraham) (as) but with a mixture of superstitions and polytheism. Some of their ritual actions were: halt at 'Arafat, sacrifice, circumambulation, and run between Safa and Marwah, which were done in a special state.

Islam, clearing out that noble performance from superstitions, accepted Hajj pilgrimage as a great worship and approved all of its correct and pure ceremonies.

One of the deeds which was to be done then was / Sa'y /, i.e., running between two hillocks called Safa and Marwah, over which the aforementioned idols were kept and pagans touched them when climbing those two hillocks.

Hence, Muslims were averse to going to these hillocks and thought that in that circumstance it was not right for them to perform running between Safa and Marwah.

Then, it was at the time of 'Umrat-ul-Ghada (in seventh AH.) that the above verse was revealed and announced that Safa and Marwah are among the Symbols of *Allah* and, although some ignorant people have polluted them with idols, it is not right that Muslims abandon the obligatory running between them.

Acts Done Ignorantly

This verse, regarding the particular psychological condition that was mentioned in the occasion of revelation, preliminarily informs Muslims that Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of *Allah*:

"Behold, Safa and Marwah are among the Symbols (appointed by) Allah..."

After this introductory sentence, it subsequently comes to the meaning that:

"...so, whoever makes the pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House, or Performs 'Umrah, therefore it is no blame on him to go round them both..."

The wrong behaviour of pagans, that had polluted the symbols of *Allah* with those idols, should never decrease anything of the importance of those two sacred sites.

At the end of the verse, it says:

"... And for whoever (obeys Him and) initiates good, then verily Allah is Grateful, All-Knowing."

Therefore, the Lord, by giving good rewards bountifully, thanks the servants for their obedience and doing right actions; while He is completely aware of their intentions and knows who is interested in the idols and who is averse to them.

Explanation

It may be worthy to say that the terms Safa and Marwah are referred to in the Qur'an only once.

These two hillocks stand nearly 420 meters opposite each other. This distance is now set up as a covered hall under whose ceiling the pilgrims perform the running, / sa'y /. The height of Safa Mount is 15 meters, and that of Marwah is 8 meters.

These two terms, used now as proper names for those two hillocks, are philologically meaningful, too. The term / safa / means a hard smooth stone, while / marwah / means a hard rough stone.

The Qur'anic term / Sa'a'ir / is the plural form of / Sa'irah / which means 'ritual sign'. Therefore, the phrase / Sa'a'irillah / means anything which reminds a person of *Allah*, and revives a sacred remembrance in one's mind which, itself, would be an act of virtue or devotion to *Allah*.

The term / 'itamara /, derived from / 'umrah /, originally means the additional parts that are added to a building in order to complete it. This word, used in religious terminology, is applied for special deeds added to the performances of Hajj Pilgrimage.

(When 'Umrah is done separate from Hajj pilgrimage, it is called / 'umrah mufradah /, a single 'Umrah). This minor pilgrimage to Mecca is very much similar to Hajj pilgrimage in many aspects, but its difference is not so minute, of course.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 159-160

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي
الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

159. *"Verily, those who conceal what We have revealed of the clear evidence and the guidance, after We made it clear for mankind in the Book; they are those that Allah does curse them and (also) curse them (all) those who curse (such ones)."*

160. *"Except those who repent, and amend (themselves) and make manifest (the truth). These it is unto whom I turn (mercifully; and I am the Oft-Returning (to mercy), the Merciful (to people))."*

Occasion of Revelation

Jalal-ud-Din Suyuty has narrated in his book, 'Asbab-un-Nuzul, from Ibn-Abbas that several Muslim people, such as Ma'ath-ibn-Jabal, Sa'd-ibn-Ma'ath, and Kharijat-ibn-Ziyd asked scholars of the Jews

several questions about some subjects in the Torah (which concerned the advent of the Prophet (S)). They concealed the reality of the subject and, (in their answers), did not refer to the main idea. The above verse was revealed about them. 10

In the occasion of revelation it was mentioned that the addressees in this verse were the scholars of the Jews, but the meaning is general and never limits the concept of the verse to them only. It covers all whosoever that conceal the truth.

This holy verse intensively blames such people, saying:

"Verily, those who conceal what We have revealed of the clear evidence and the guidance, after We made it clear for mankind in the Book; they are those that Allah does curse them and (also) curse them (all) those who curse (such ones)."

By this verse, we realize that both *Allah* and the servants of *Allah* and angels totally hate this action. In other words, concealing the fact is an action that stimulates the wrath of all adherents of truth from jinn, mankind, and angels.

What a treachery is greater than that the scholars, for the sake of their personal interest, hide the Messages and evidences of *Allah*, which are His deposits, and cause people to go astray.

The phrase: ***"after We made it clear for mankind in the Book;"*** indicates that such persons, in fact, attempt to spoil the struggles of prophets and the devotions of the godly people alongside the path of the propagation of the Messages of *Allah*. This action is really a great sin so that none can ignore.

The Qur'an, as a book of guidance, never blocks up the way of return and does not shut the windows of hope to people. It never makes people despair for the Mercy of *Allah*, however much they are sinful. Hence, in the next verse, it shows the way of repentance of this great sin, thus:

"Except those who repent, and amend (themselves) and make manifest (the truth). These it is unto whom I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-Returning (to mercy), the Merciful (to people)."

The phrase: ***"and I am the Oft-Returning (to mercy), the Merciful (to people),"*** regarding that it has occurred next to the phrase: ***"These it is unto whom I turn (mercifully)"*** refers to the particular affection and kindness of *Allah* unto the repentant ones.

It says if they return, *Allah* will return, too. If they return to the obedience and servitude, and reveal the fact, *Allah* will return to Mercy and again shower over them the blessings He had ceased.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 161-163

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ
أَجْمَعِينَ

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ

وَاللَّهُمَّ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

161. "Verily those who reject faith, and die while they are infidels, upon them shall be the curse of Allah, (of) the angels, and (of) mankind all together."

162. "Abiding therein forever, the torment shall not be lightened for them nor shall they be given respite."

163. "And your God is One God. There is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful."

It was described in the former verses that if the people who conceal the fact repent and express the reality, they will be involved in the mercy and grace of *Allah*. But in this verse they are warned that if they do not repent and remain in the state of infidelity until they die, they will be in the same situation that *Allah*, angels and all people curse them.

Of course, the repentance that occurs before death is accepted, but the repentance at the moment of death is not helpful.

At first, it says:

"Verily those who reject faith, and die while they are infidels, upon them shall be the curse of Allah, (of) the angels, and (of) mankind all together."

This group of infidels, similar to the aforementioned group, is involved in the curse of *Allah*, angels, and people, too. The difference is that this group, because of their continuous insistence on being faithless, can not have a way to return to the right path.

Then, it adds:

"Abiding therein forever, the torment shall not be lightened for them nor shall they be given respite."

Since the principle of the Faith in theism can put an end to all these misfortunes, in the last verse of this group of verses, it says:

"And your God is One God...."

Again, to emphasize more, it says:

"... There is no god but He..."

Then, at the end of the verse, as the reason for that statement, it adds:

"...He is the Beneficent, the Merciful."

Yes, only the One, Whose general mercy encompasses all creatures, on one side, and on the other side, Whose specific Mercy reaches the true believers, deserves servitude, and no one else.

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1. Nahjul-Balagha, Saying No.93
 2. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 143
 3. Al-Burhan fi Tafsir-il-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 169
 4. Al-Burhan fi Tafsir-il-Qur'an, vol. I, p. 197
 5. Tara'if, by Sayyid-ibn-Tawus, p. 177; & Sunan Abi-Dawud, vol. 4, p. 152
 6. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 142
 7. Makhzan-ul-'Irfan, vol. 2, p. 143
 8. Tibyan fi-Tafsir-il-Qur'an, vol. 2, p.44
 9. Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 240
 10. Lubab-un-Nuqul fi 'Asbab-in-Nuzul, p. 22

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