

## Section 1: The Defeat of the Romans Prophesied

### Surah Ar-Room – Verses 1-5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ

فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلِبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ

فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

1. ***“Alif ‘A’, Lam ‘L’, Mim ‘M’.”***
2. ***“The Romans have been defeated.”***
3. ***“In a near land, but they, after being defeated, will soon be victorious,”***
4. ***“Within a few years. To Allah belongs the Command before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice.”***
5. ***“With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful.”***

The Arabic word ***/bid’/*** means: ‘a piece’, as the Prophet (S) said:

*“Fatimah is a piece from me.”*

Sometimes the objective meaning of ***/bid’/*** is a part of time between three to nine years.

**Question:** What relation is there between the triumph of the army of Room over Iranians and the Muslims that the Qur’an says:

***“...that day the believers shall rejoice”?***

**Answer:** The Prophet of Islam (S) wrote two letters to the kings of Iran and Room and invited them to the religion of Islam. The king of Iran, Khusrow Parviz, tore the letter, but the king of Room respected Prophet’s letter.

Muslims liked the Romans who respected Prophet’s letter to be victorious, but they failed in the war, so the Muslims became inconvenient because of that event.

By these holy verses Allah gave a good tidings to the Muslims that although Romans failed, they would win the battle thereafter in near future and that victory could make the believers happy.<sup>1</sup> Yes, a faithful society should not look only its own inside but it must show reaction unto the bitter and sweet events of other nations, too.

## **The Occasion of Revelation**

The great Islamic commentators all believe that the beginning verses of this Surah were sent down for the sake that at that time when the Prophet (S) was at Mecca and the believers were in minority, there happened a fight between Iranians and Romans, and Iranians became victorious.

Pagans of Mecca, then, took it as a good omen and considered it as a proof of legitimacy for their own polytheism. They said Iranians were Zoroastrians and polytheists (dualists), but Romans were Christians, the People of the Book’.

Since Iranians overcame Romans, then the final victory belonged to polytheism and Islam would be vanished soon and they (the polytheists) might be victorious.

Though such conclusions had no foundation, but, in that atmosphere and that environment, they were not far from effect for propagation amongst those ignorant people. Therefore, that event seemed heavy for the early Muslims.

The abovementioned verses were revealed, saying decisively that though Iranians became victorious in that war, after a short time they would bear a failure from Romans. The Qur'an stated even the time of that prophecy and said that that event would happen during a few years.

This decisive prediction of the Qur'an which, from one side, was the sign of the miracle of this heavenly Book and the sign of the relation of its bringer to the infinite knowledge of Allah (s.w.t.) unto the world of Unseen, and on the other side, it was a point opposite to the bibliomancy of the polytheists, encouraged the Muslims in a manner that, it is even said, some of them laid an important wager with the polytheists upon this matter.

(At that time the command of the prohibition of these sorts of betting had not been sent down yet.)

However, this Surah is the twenty ninth Surah of the Qur'an which begins with the abbreviated letters. We have repeatedly discussed on the commentary of these abbreviated letters<sup>2</sup>.

The only thing which attracts attention here is that, contrary to many Suras of the Qur'an which begin with abbreviated letters and next to them the words are about the greatness of the Qur'an, in this Surah there is not any discussion upon the greatness of the Qur'an, while the words are about the Roman's failure and their future victory.

But a careful study makes it clear that this discussion is also the statement of the greatness of the Qur'an, because this prediction is considered as one of the signs of the miracle of the Holy Qur'an and the greatness of this heavenly Book.

After mentioning the abbreviated letters, it says:

***“The Romans have been defeated.”***

***“In a near land..”***

This failure occurs in a land near you, the people of Mecca, in the North of Arabia, in the land of Syria, the western Rome.

Some commentators, like Shaykh Tusi in Tibyan, have said that the purpose of it may be a place near the land of Iranians, that is, it happened in a land which was the nearest point between Turan and Rome.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that because of the existence of Alif and Lam in the Arabic word *'al 'ard'*, the first commentary is more suitable, but as we will explain later, from some view points, the second commentary seems more proper.

Here, there is a third commentary that, maybe from the point of result, does not differ so much from the second commentary. According to this commentary the objective of it is the land of Rome. That is, they confronted defeat then in the nearest parts of their boundaries with Iran; and this points to the importance and depth of this failure.

Defeat in far points and distanced boundaries, is not so important. The important matter is that a country is defeated in its nearest boundaries with enemy where it is more powerful and forceful than other places.

Therefore, mentioning the phrase: /fi 'adnal 'ard/ (in a near land) is a hint to the importance of this defeat, and predicting the triumph of the defeated party during a few years in future is of a greater magnificence and it is not predictable but by the way of miracle.

Then the verse adds:

***“...but they, after being defeated, will soon be victorious,”***

The Qur'anic sentence ***/sayaqlibun/ (they will soon be victorious)*** was enough for stating the purpose definitely, but the sentence ***/min ba'd-i-qalabihim/ (after being defeated)*** has particularly been added to it in order that the importance of this victory becomes more manifest, because when a defeated group can overcome the enemy in its nearest and strongest boundaries and specially during a short time, it is something unexpectedly, and the Qur'an explicitly predicts this event.

Then, through the next holy verse, the Noble Qur'an states the approximate years of its occurrence, but saying:

***“With in a few years...”***

And we know that the Arabic word ***ibid'*** means a figure at least 'three' and at most 'nine'.

If we see that Allah (s.w.t.) predicts the future, it is because everything and every affair is in His authority whether before victory or after the victory of this defeated nation.

The verse says:

***“...To Allah belongs the Command before and after...”***

It is evident that everything being in Allah's authority and by His command does not hinder our freedom and will for effort and endeavour and striving in the path of obtaining our aims.

In other words, this phrase does not intend to negate the authority of others, but it intends to make this matter clear that it is He Who is Mighty by Essence and is the absolute Owner, and whoever possesses anything he has it from His side.

Then the verse implies that if today that the Romans failed and the polytheists became happy, on that day when the Romans overcame the believers would become happy.

The verse continues saying:

***“...and on that day the believers shall rejoice.”***

Yes, by Allah’s help they will be happy.

The next Holy verse announces:

***“With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful.”***

Upon the objective meaning of the sentence:

***“On that day the believers shall rejoice”,***

the commentators have delivered different ideas. Some of them have said that this rejoice is because of Roman’s victory, though they themselves were in the row of pagans, too, but since they had heavenly Book their victory over the Zoroastrians, who were polytheists, was one stage of victory of ‘Monotheism’ over ‘polytheism’.

Some other commentators have added that the believers became happy for they took this event as a good omen and as an evidence for their victory over the polytheists.

Or their happiness was for the sake that the greatness and truthfulness of the decisive prediction of the holy Qur’an, which itself was counted as an important spiritual victory for the Muslims, appeared on that day.

This probability does not seem so far that the Roman victory was simultaneous with one of the Muslims’ victories over the polytheists in particular that some of the statements of the commentators indicate that this victory was simultaneous with the victory of the ‘Badr’ or with the peace agreement of Hodaybiyyah which was counted a great victory.

In particular that the application of ***“With the help of Allah’*** is in consonant with this meaning, too.

In short, the Muslims became happy from different points of view on that day because of the victory of the ‘People of the Book’ over the Zoroastrians, which was a scene of the victory of Monotheism against polytheism.

This happiness was because of spiritual victory for the appearance of the miracle of the Qur’an. Or it was for the sake of its simultaneous victory of Muslims, probably the peace of Hodaybiyyah or one of other conquests of the Muslims.

## Surah Ar-Room – Verse 6

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**6. “(This victory is ) Allah’s promise! Allah does not fail His promise, but most people do not know.”**

The cause of breach of promises is either powerlessness, or ignorance, or regret, but Allah, the Almighty, the Aware, is free from all of them.

The reason of unawareness of people is the lack of their knowledge due to the Knowledge and Power of Allah.

They have not known Allah properly; therefore they are not aware of this fact that He never fails His promise. Breach of promise is either because of ignorance unto something that it had been concealed, then it has become revealed and has caused the change of idea.

Or it is because of weakness and inability, when the giver of promise has not changed his mind but he is not able to perform his promise.

But Allah, Who is both aware of the sequences of the affairs and His Power is above all powers, will never breach His promise.

The verse says:

**“(This victory is ) Allah’s promise! Allah does not fail His promise, but most people do not know.”**

## Surah Ar-Room – Verse 7

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

**7. “They know (only) the appearance of the life of this world and they are heedless of the Hereafter.”**

Being in the love of the materials of the world causes the negligence from Hereafter.

The world itself is not bad, but negligence from Hereafter is bad. This holy verse implies that these shortsighted people see only the outward of the life in this world but they are unaware of the hereafter

and the end of the affairs.

It says:

***“They know (only) the appearance of the life of this world and they are heedless of the Hereafter.”***

Common people are only aware of the life of the world, and they have also sufficed to the outward of this life. A collection of amusements, some temporary pleasures, and vain imaginations have formed their understanding from the life of this world. The pride and negligence, which is hidden in this understanding, is not concealed to anyone.

If they only knew the inward and innate of the life of this world, too, it was enough for the recognition of the Hereafter, because enough care in this temporary life shows that it is a ring from a long circle of affairs and it is a stage out of a great and long way.

As the care upon the life of an embryo in its term shows that the final aim is not only this short life by itself, but it is a preliminary stage for a later vast life. Yes they see only the appearance of this life and are heedless of its content, its concepts, and what is in its inside.

It is interesting that here by the repetition of the Arabic pronoun */hum/ (they)* the Holy Qur’an points to this fact that the people themselves are the cause of this negligence and heedlessness. It is just like that someone tells us *“You neglected me from this thing”*; and in answer to him we say: *“You yourself neglected”*. That is, you yourself were the cause of negligence.

At the end, one of the ways of proving the miracle of the Qur’an is the prediction of the Qur’an, one of which is clearly mentioned in these very verses. Through a few verses and with kinds of emphasis, the Qur’an informs of a great victory in a few later years for a defeated army and introduces it as a promise of Allah which never fails.

From one side, the Holy Qur’an predicts the reality of the victory itself, by saying:

***“...but they, after being defeated, will soon be victorious.”***<sup>4</sup>

From another side, it informs of another victory for the Muslims against the pagans simultaneous with it.

And, from the third side, the noble Qur’an declares that this event will happen in a few future years.

In the fourth side, with two emphases, the Qur’an confirms the decisiveness of the promise of Allah:

***“(This victory is) Allah’s promise! Allah does not fail His promise...”***<sup>5</sup>

The history indicates that it was before nine years that these two events happened: the Romans won a new separate war against Iranians, and at the same time the Muslims, by the peace of Hdaybiyyah (and according to a tradition in the Battle of Badr), obtained a considerable victory against the enemies.

Principally, the thought of a godly and faithful person is very different from that of a materialist or a polytheist.

A believer, according to his Monotheistic belief, thinks of the world as the creation of Allah, the Wise, the Aware, Whose all deeds are done accurately and regularly. For this reason, he believes that the world is a collection of some exact secrets and mysteries. Nothing is simple in this world. All the words of this Book are expressive and meaningful.

This Monotheistic belief tells him not to simply pass by any event and any matter, because the simplest problems may be the most complicated ones.

He always observes the depth of the things of this world and does not suffice to the appearance of the world. He has learnt this lesson in the school of monotheism.

He considers a great aim for the world and he sees all things inside the circle of that aim; while an ordinary faithless person considers the world as a collection of events which have no aim, and he does not think but about its outward.

In principle, he does not consider any innate and depth for it. Is it possible that we consider a depth and magnificence for a book which contains of only some lines that a little child have created on its pages with his own hand without having any aim?

According to some of the great scientists of the natural science, all those scientists who have contemplated about the system of the world have a sort of religious thought.

## Surah Ar-Room – Verse 8

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ

**8. “Have they not pondered upon themselves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them but with truth and (for) an appointed term? And verily most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord (at the Resurrection).”**

Contemplation is usually the medicine of the sickness of negligence.

The consequence of a safe and sound thought is having belief in truthfulness and knowing that existence and Hereafter have an aim, while the consequence of thoughtlessness is often disbelief and denial of Resurrection.

The words in the previous verse were about those who see only the surface of the things and whose thoughts are limited to observing this world and the world of matter and they are not aware of the Hereafter and the world of super nature.

This holy verse, as well as the later verses, mentions some various matters around the Origin and Resurrection.

At first, in the form of a question, the verse critically says:

***“Have they not pondered upon themselves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them but with truth and (for) an appointed term?...”***

That is, if they do contemplate correctly and refer to both their own conscience and the judgment of their intellect, they will be well familiar with these two things: that, firstly, the world has been created on the basis of truth, and it contains some systems which prove the existence of a complete wisdom and power with the creator of this world.

Secondly, this world goes toward downfall and destruction; and in view of the fact that it is impossible that the Wise Creator has created it in vain, this is an evidence that after this world there is another world which is the eternal abode, else the creation of this world, with all its things created only for a few days of life, would be meaningless, and by this we find out the existence of the Hereafter.

Thus, a careful observation in the regularity and legitimacy of this world leads to the existence of its origin, and a careful attention to its having ‘an appointed term’ is an evidence to the ‘Resurrection’. (Be careful)

That is why, at the end of this holy verse the Qur’an adds:

***“...And verily most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord (at the Resurrection).”***

Either the pagans are principally deniers of Resurrection, as the verses of the Qur’an have repeatedly narrated from their tongue who used to say: When we have become dust, shall we certainly be brought forth again? This is impossible! This is evident that its talker is mad.<sup>6</sup>

Or they do not deny it by their tongues, but their deeds are so polluted and shameful that they indicate that they do not believe in Resurrection, because if they believed they would not be so mischievous and corrupt.

By the Qur’anic phrase *lfi ‘anfusahim/ (upon themselves)* it is understood that they should study about the secrets of their selves, as Fakhr–Razi has said in his commentary, but the purpose is that they may contemplate upon the creation of the heavens and the earth from inside of their selves and souls by the way of intellect and conscience.

The Arabic word *bil haqq*, applied in this verse, may have two meanings: one is that creation is accompanied with truth, law, and regularity. The second is that the aim of creation is a true aim, and, of course, these two recent commentaries do not contrast with each other.

As we have repeatedly said in this commentary, the Qur'anic phrase *lliqa'-i-rabbihim* (**meeting of their Lord**) means Hereafter and Resurrection where the curtains will be removed and, by inner intuition, man will know Allah with His greatness.

## Surah Ar-Room – Verse 9

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ  
مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

**9. “Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how was the end of these before them? They were stronger than them in strength, and they ploughed up the earth and cultivated it more than they themselves have cultivated it; and their messenger came to them with clear proofs (miracles) (which they rejected, to their own destruction); so Allah would never deal with them unjustly, but they dealt unjustly with their own selves.”**

We must look at the fate and the end of the former nations, not at their daily glories.

Concerning the necessity of familiarity with the events in history and contemplating on them, Hadrat Ali (as), addressing his son, says:

*“Though my age is not so old but I am familiar with the history of the former nations as if I have the lifetime of history.”*<sup>7</sup>

Explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic sentence:

**“Have they not travelled in the earth”**

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“The purpose of it is contemplation and study the history of the former nations (who are mentioned) in the Qur'an”.*<sup>8</sup>

However, the Qur'an in this verse says:

**“Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how was the end of these before them?...”**

These nations are those who had a better power than these ones and who had changed the land and had flourished it more than that they did.

Here is what the verse says:

***“...They were stronger than them in strength, and they ploughed up the earth and cultivated it more than they themselves have cultivated it...”***

Divine messengers came to them with clear miracles, but they showed stubbornness and did not submit to the Truth and, consequently, they encountered the painful chastisement of Allah.

The verse continues saying:

***“...and their messenger came to them with clear proofs (miracles) (which they rejected, to their own destruction)...”***

***“...so Allah would never deal with them unjustly, but they dealt unjustly with their own selves.”***

In fact, the holy Qur’an here points to those nations who, comparing the polytheists coeval with the Prophet (S), were considerably stronger than these people from the point of power, bodily strength, and finance, and it explains their painful end as a lesson for these people.

The Qur’anic phrase: *’aḥḥar-ul-’ard’* (***they ploughed up the earth***) may refer to ploughing the earth for farming and planting trees, or digging it for streams and irrigation systems, or preparing the land for building high buildings, or all of these affairs, for this phrase has a vast concept which encompasses these things which are the preliminary of cultivation.<sup>9</sup>

And since in the world of that day the utmost power was in the hand of those who were more developed from the point of agriculture and had considerably progressed in constructing buildings, the superiority of those nations, comparing the polytheists of Mecca whose ability, from this point of view, was very limited is made clear.

Yet, those nations, with all their power and abilities, when they rejected the Divine revelations and denied their messengers, could not escape from the grips of divine punishment, then how can you escape?

These painful punishments are the fruit and sequence of their own deeds. They themselves did unjustly against their own selves and Allah would never deal with them unjustly.

## **Surah Ar-Room – Verse 10**

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا السُّوْأَىٰ ۖ أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

**10. “Then evil was the end of those that did evil, for they belied the signs of Allah, and at them they used to mock.”**

Those who usually reject the verses of Allah and mock them do not often gain any benefit from their deeds except evil punishment.

The above holy verse, which is the last verse of the verses under discussion, states the last stage of their infidelity. It implies that the end of those who did evil in this world was that they rejected the revelations of Allah, and worse than that, they mocked them.

The verse says:

***“Then evil was the end of those that did evil, for they belied the signs of Allah, and at them they used to mock.”***

Yes, sin and committing evil, like the sickness of gangrene, attacks man and consumes the soul of faith and destroys it. Such a person reaches a point that he belies the Divine verses and, beyond that, he mocks both the messengers and the revelations of Allah.

Such a person will be in a stage that no advice, no admonition, and no warning is effective on him, and there will remain no way except the lash of the painful punishment of Allah.

A glance upon the life of a great deal of rebellious and criminal persons shows that at the beginning they were not like that. At least there was a slight and weak light of faith in their hearts, but committing consecutive sins caused them to get distance from Faith and piety a day after another and, at last they reached the stage of infidelity.

This verse, with the same concept that was described in the above, was also mentioned in the famous sermon of Hadrat Zaynab (as), the brave woman of Karbala, that she delivered in Syria in front of Yazid.

When Hadrat Zaynab (as) observed that Yazid, by saying some blasphemous words and reciting those famous poems, which showed his disbelief in the basis of Islam, was mocking everything, after praising Allah and greeting to the Prophet (S), she clearly said:

*“It is not wonderful that today, by these poems, you deny Islam and Faith, and you tell your polytheistic ancestors, who were killed in the Battle of Badr by Muslims, that you wish they were here and would see that you have taken vengeance from the family of Bani Hashim.*

*It is the same thing that Allah (s.w.t.) has said and announced that the sinners will finally belie the signs of Allah...”*

She said many things in this regard.10

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1. Wasa'il, Vol. 20, P. 67
  2. Especially at the beginning of Suras Al-Baqarah, 'Al-i-'Imran, and Al-'A'raf
  3. Tibyan Commentary, Vol. 8, P. 206
  4. Verse 3 out of verses under discussion
  5. Verse 6 out of verses under discussion
  6. Surah Ar-Ra'd, No. 13, verse 5; Surah Al-Mu'minin, No. 23, verse 35; Surah An-Naml, No. 27, verse 67; and Surah Ghaf, No. 50, verse 3
  7. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, letter No. 31
  8. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
  9. The Arabic term /'a'ar/ is derived from /'aur/ in the sense of 'scatter', and that in the Arabic language a male cow is called /'aur/ is for the sake that the land is ploughed by it.
  10. For more explanation, you can refer to Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 45, P. 157

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