

Section 21, Only lawful and clean food should be taken

Injunction about the use of food–stuff –Blind following disallowed.

Concealing of truth and corrupting the Word of God and bartering it for worldly gains amounts to the eating of Fire.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 168–169

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

168. "O' mankind! eat of what is in the earth lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is a manifest foe for you."

169. "Verily, he (Satan) enjoins you evil acts and indecency and that you should speak against Allah what you know not."

One of the signs of a complete religion is that it considers the usage of the unlawful food–stuffs a Satanic deed (as the Qur'an says: "...*intoxicants and games of chance... are an abomination of Satan's work...*") 1, and the inappropriate avoidance of eating the lawful ones originated from the temptations of Satan, (as the Qur'an says: "...*eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the*

footsteps of Satan...").² Therefore, in the current verse, too, it says:

"O' mankind! eat of what is in the earth lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan...."

In some of the historical narrations it is cited that a few of the Arab tribes had unreasonably forbidden a part of their crops and their animals for themselves, where they used to sometimes attribute those prohibitions to *Allah*. Then, the above verse was revealed to dismiss that ambiguity.

Islam pays also specific attention to the material life of people. At the top of these things is the food necessities about which there are found tens of Qur'anic verses and hundreds of traditions in Islamic literature.

One of the duties of prophets has been to define the lawful and unlawful edible materials and drinks beside the introduction of the advantages and disadvantages of each of them. This verse emphasizes that we have to consume from what is religiously lawful and pure / halal / on the earth:

"O' mankind! eat of what is in the earth lawful and good;..."

And that we must not prohibit ourselves from some things under the effect of the Satan's temptation, because it is certain that Satan is our open enemy:

"...and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is a manifest foe for you."

Imam Baqir (as) has narrated a tradition from the Prophet (S) who said: *"Worship of Allah is divided into seventy divisions, the best of which is earning a living lawfully."*³

Again, in another tradition, the very holy Imam, the fifth Imam, (as) has said: *"He who seeks for sustenance in this world in order to be independent of people for his needs, to provide for his family members, and to stretch affection unto his neighbours, will meet Allah, Almighty and Glorious, on the Day of Judgement while his face will be as bright as the full moon."*⁴

It is cited in Tafsir-i-Rouh-ul-Bayan that Satan has some different stages in his invitations unto temptations. At first, he invites to infidelity. If he fails in this phase, he invites to innovation. If he does not succeed, he invites to lesser sins.

Failing in these stages, Satan invites to doing good and lawful deeds instead of worshipping *Allah*. When he fails in this phase, too, he invites to performing worships with lower qualities than the noble ones in order to stop a person from promoting to higher degrees.⁵

Thus, the statement of the verse is a warning against what Satan does and how he leads men astray by his different forms of evil whispers when the Qur'an says:

"Verily, he (Satan) enjoins you evil acts and indecency and that you should speak against Allah what you know not."

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 170-171

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوْلَوْا كَانُ
آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ
فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

170. "And when they are told: 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say: 'Nay! We follow what we found our fathers upon,' even though their fathers had no understanding of anything nor were they guided aright.

171. "And the parable of those who reject Faith is as the likeness of the one who shouts to that which hears no more than a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, and blind (are they) wherefore they do not understand."

Blind following of the ancestors is condemned

The previous verse warned us to avoid following the whispers and footsteps of Satan. Now, in this verse, one of the examples of those footsteps, which is the blind following of others, is pointed out. It says:

"And when they are told:

'Follow what Allah has sent down,'

They say: 'Nay! We follow what we found our fathers upon!...' "

They mean that they do not care what the verse of Allah say or the messenger of Allah invites to. So, in answer to them, the Qur'an says:

"...even though their fathers had no understanding of anything nor were they guided aright."

This statement refers to the fact that: if their fathers had no wisdom and understanding by themselves nor had they accepted the godly guidance of the prophets, then, would they follow their fathers yet? If their ancestors or the infidels themselves had wisdom or were guided, it would not matter, but it is not so.

There are two comparisons in this verse: 1) the likening of the caller of Truth to a shepherd; 2) the likening of infidels to some beasts that understand nothing from the speech of the shepherd save a call and a cry. This simile has been confirmed in a tradition by Imam Baqir (as), too. The parable means that the invitation of the Prophet (S) from that faithless crowd to Truth and breaking the dam-like barrier of blindly imitation is similar to the person who shouts to cattle of sheep or some animals in order to save them from danger but they do not understand this message.

"And the parable of those who reject Faith is as the likeness of the one who shouts to that which hears no more than a call and a cry..."

Then, at the end of the verse, to emphasize more and to explain it more clearly, it adds:

"... deaf, dumb, and blind (are they) wherefore they do not understand."

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 172

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ
تَعْبُدُونَ

172. "O' you who have Faith! eat of the good things We have provided you with, and be grateful to Allah, if Him it is you worship."

In this verse, too, *Allah* advises us to be grateful for using the blessings and bounties, and thank Him. There is a tradition from the holy Prophet (S), cited in Tafsir Safi, stating that *Allah* says that He creates people, but they worship other than Him; and, He provides (them) sustenance, but they thank others save *Allah*. 6

It is made clear in this verse that we ought to eat from the good wholesome foods that *Allah* has provided us sustenance and be thankful to Him.

"O' you who have Faith! eat of the good things We have provided you with, and be grateful to Allah..."

Intellect necessitates the act of thankfulness to the giver of a bounty, too.

"... if Him it is you worship."

However, being thankful to *Allah* is a means of continuity and abundancy of bounties. And, to be grateful to *Allah* is a sign of sincerity and the purity of one's Faith.

It is narrated from Imam Hadi (as) who said that the wrath of *Allah* encompasses those who prohibit or deprive themselves from the godly lawful things and permissible deeds. 7

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 173

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ
غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

173. "Verily, He has forbidden you only carrion, blood, swine flesh, and whatever has other (name) than Allah's been invoked upon it. But whoever is forced (by necessity), not desiring nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Following the previous subject, this verse states that certain edible things are lawful to eat, and we should not prohibit the lawful things of *Allah* to ourselves opinionatedly and because of some vain imaginations. Yet, *Allah* has forbidden us carrion, blood, swine flesh or the flesh of any animal slaughtered invoking the name of anybody else other than God, as it says:

"Verily, He has forbidden you only carrion, blood, swine flesh, and whatever has other (name) than Allah's been invoked upon it...."

There are some logical and acceptable reasons cited for this Divine law of prohibition, of course. For example, it is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said:

"No one obtains anything from carrion but weakness of his body, decrease of his strength, and cease of his offspring. And, the consumer of carrion dies not but by a sudden death. Those who consume blood (as food stuff) become hard-hearted...." 8

According to some hygienical advice, the flesh of swine is the carrier of two kinds of microbes called tapeworms and trichina. (The latter is a very small nematode worm trichinella, whose larvae infest the intestines and voluntary muscles of man, pigs etc., causing trichinosis).

Today, it is forbidden to use swine flesh even in some Eastern countries. In former divine religions, such as the religion of the Jews, the flesh of swine has been held in great detestation. In the Bible, the sinners are also likened to swine.

There is an exception, of course, where the term / qayrabaqin / denotes not for enjoyment but forced by unavoidable necessity, and term / 'adin / means without any intention to revolt against the prescribed laws of *Allah* or not exceeding the bare limits of the actual want or the bare necessity.

If anybody under circumstances beyond his control or forced by necessity, to save his life, takes such

things, it will not be a sin upon him.

"...But whoever is forced (by necessity), not desiring nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him..."

This permission is because of the Mercy and Grace of *Allah*, as the verse itself says:

"...surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful..."

It is cited in Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn in an expressive tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said: *"Whoever is forced (to eat) carrion or blood, or swine flesh and he avoids eating something of it until he dies, then he is an infidel."* 9

Explanations

1. Islam has paid full attention to the problem of food-stuffs. It has frequently warned Muslims against the putrid, harmful, and unlawful food. The prohibition of swine flesh, carrion and blood is found in four occurrences in the Qur'an. The Messages of this prohibition were preached two times in Medina and two times in Mecca.
2. Considering *Allah*, and invoking His name at the time of slaughtering animals, is necessary. This is to warn us to know and be aware that everything belongs to *Allah* and therefore, none of our deeds should be done out of the circle of theism.
3. Islam is a complete and an easy religion. It stops in no, circumstance. Every ritual duty or religious prohibition can be changed when there is an emergency.
4. No one must misuse the necessary circumstances in this respect.

General Conclusion

Here in this verse, and in the similar other verses of the Qur'an, is laid down the principle of the Islamic law to be observed under normal conditions and the law of exception for the state of emergency.

The things forbidden under normal conditions may be permissible in the emergency. The spirit of the law to be observed in both the cases is the sense of obedience, and sticking to the prescribed limits. Under no circumstances any revolt against any law is allowed.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 174-176

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ

174. "Surely those who conceal any part of the Book which Allah has sent down (to them), and sell it for a small price - they shall eat naught but Fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and theirs will be a painful punishment."

175. "Those are they who have bought error for guidance and punishment for forgiveness; how they shall endure the Fire!"

176. "This is because Allah has sent down the Book with the Truth; and surely those who differ in the Book are in flagrant schism."

Before the advent of the holy Prophet of Islam (S), the Jewish scholars used to tell their people about that happy advent and described the signs of that promised Prophet for them from the Torah.

But as soon as the Prophet of Islam (S) was divinely appointed and announced his Call, they did not confess the prophet hood of Muhammad (S) for they thought they would lose their position, wealth, etc. It was why they neglected everything and concealed the Truth.

Such people, by concealing the fact, might remain in their position receiving some presents and gifts for a length of time but this is a little price comparing to that great sin of theirs.

"Surely those who conceal any part of the Book which Allah has sent down (to them), and sell it for a small price..."

What they take and eat in this bargain is naught, indeed, but Fire.

This meaning is similar to the content of the verse where eating the wealth of orphans is likened to Fire, too, as if they ate Fire in their bellies. 10 So, it says:

"...they shall eat naught but Fire into their bellies..."

On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not speak to these people mercifully, while the believers can

Speak with Him then. This talk, of course, may be either through some waves created in the space, or by inspiration and the mute tongue of the heart. On that Day all believing people can become interlocutors of *Allah*.

Those persons, who tried to bar the influence of the sound of truth from reaching the ears of people, have shut, in fact, the way of the speech of *Allah* on the Reckoning Day to themselves. They will not hear a word of kindness, but hear the word of wrath in Hell, being addressed with words such as:

"Go away into it and speak not (to Me)...". 11

Allah will not purify them from their sins then, because there will be a painful punishment prepared for them as a result of their evil actions in this world.

"...and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and theirs will be a painful punishment."

Explanations

1. Selling Faith, in any case and rate, is a loss and the obtained price is a little: ***"...and sell it for a small price.."***
2. The unlawful food or drinks of this world will incarnate in the form of Fire in the Hereafter, ***"...but Fire..."***
3. Punishment should be appropriate to the crime. Those who bar the way of reaching the word of *Allah* for people to hearken in this world must be deprived from the pleasure of hearing the speech of *Allah* in the next world.
4. Concealing the truth is not only about the holy Prophet (S). Those who conceal the truth about the true successors of Prophet Muhammad (S), receive the same punishment, too.

That is, those who have hidden the announcement of the Messenger of *Allah* in Qadir-i-Khum and obliterated it from their history and commentary books and perverted the process of the verses of the Qur'an with their own justifications in order to mislead Muslims towards some particular ones other than the immaculate Imams have concealed the Truth, too.

Those who conceal the Truth are some persons who exchange misguidance for guidance and punishment for forgiveness.

"Those are they who have bought error for guidance and punishment for forgiveness..."

Do they not know that they somehow share with the corruption and aberration of mankind throughout history by their action when they conceal the Truth? Do they think that they are able to bear the punishment of *Allah*?

"... how they shall endure the Fire! "

It is narrated in a tradition that the holy Prophet (S), speaking with Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), said: *"The worst of men is he who sells his coming world for his present life, and more evil than this is the one who sells his coming world for the present life of someone else."* 12

The people who conceal the Truth are severely warned and threatened with Divine punishments, because *Allah* has sent down the Book so clearly and reasonably that no doubt or ambiguity remains for anyone.

"This is because Allah has sent down the Book with the Truth..."

Yet, there are some people who, to protect their personal interests, take action in justification and falsification of the concepts of the revealed Book and cause people to differ in it. In this way, they intend to gain some profits without any due, or unlawfully. Then, *Allah*, introducing them, says:

"...and surely those who differ in the Book are in flagrant schism..."

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1. Surah Al-Ma'idah, No.5, verse 90
 2. Surah Al-'An'am, No.6. Verse 142
 3. Tafsir Al-Burhan fi vol.1 p. 173
 4. Al-Kafi vol. 5 p.78
 5. Tafsir-i-Rouh-ul-Bayan. vol. 1. p. 272
 6. Tafsir-us-Safi, vol. 1, p. 193
 7. Tafsir-i-Nur, vol. 1, p. 329
 8. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 16, p. 310
 9. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, p. 155
 10. Surah An-Nisa', No.4, verse 10
 11. Surah Al-Mu'minun, No.23, verse 108
 12. Man La Yahduru-hul-Faghih, vol. 4, p. 253

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