

Section 3: Obedience to Allah and His Messenger

Surah Al-Anfal – Verses 20-21

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

20. “O’ you who have Faith! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him while you hear (him).”

21. “And be not like those who say: ‘We heard’, but they do not hear (indeed).”

In the Qur'an thoroughly, the commandment of the obedience from the Messenger of Allah (S) has occurred next to the obedience from Allah. In eleven occurrences the term /'ati'un/ (do obey) has been mentioned after the Qur'anic phrase:

“Be in awe of Allah”.

In this verse, although both the obedience from Allah and the obedience from the Messenger are referred to, the objective is the disobedience from the Messenger, (not from Allah), especially in the Battle of Badr and his commands concerning the military affairs.

Therefore, for the continuation of the order of the truth, people should always be recommended to be obedient unto the Divine leader. The verse says:

“O’ you who have Faith! Obey Allah and His Messenger...”

It should also be known that leaving the obedience from the Prophet (S) is the disobedience from Allah. The verse continues saying:

“...and do not turn away from him while you hear (him).”

In this obedience, the obedience from the Divine leader, truthfulness is the necessary condition, and only the act of ‘hearing’ is not enough. The verse says:

“And be not like those who say: ‘We heard’, but they do not hear (indeed).”

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 22

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

22. “Verily the worst of animals in the sight of Allah are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.”

The Arabic term /summ/, mentioned in the verse, is the plural form of /asamm/ which means ‘deaf’ ; and the Qur’anic term /bukm/ is the plural form of /’abkam/ which philologically means ‘dumb’.

Those who do not accept the teachings of divine prophets are differently defined in the Qur’an.

Sometimes they are resembled to the dead, as it is recited in its two occurrences:

“Surely you do not make the dead to hear...” (Surah Ar-Room, No. 30, verse 52); and (Surah An-Naml, No. 27, verse 80)

Sometimes they are resembled to beasts:

“...and eat as the beasts eat...” (Surah Muhammad, No. 47, verse 12)

Sometimes they are introduced worse than the beasts, as the Qur’an says:

“...they are as cattle, rather they are more astray...” (Surah Al-‘Araf, No. 7, verse 179)

Sometimes they are considered as the worst creatures, as the verse under discussion says:

“Verily the worst of animals in the sight of Allah...”

Since ‘the statements’ which are not fulfilled accordingly and ‘the hearings’ which are ineffective in action are counted one of the greatest afflictions of the human societies, which can be the origin of kinds

of misfortunes, again the Qur'an emphasizes on this subject once more in this very verse, and in a delicate and nice statement, it follows that meaning by saying:

“Verily the worst of animals in the sight of Allah are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.”

Also, in view of the fact that the Qur'an is the Book of practice, and not merely a ceremonial book, thoroughly it lays emphasis on the consequences of deeds. In this verse, too, those who have safe ears but they do not pave the way of hearkening to the revelations of Allah, and do not follow the words of truth and the programs which lead to happiness, are considered as earless persons.

And, those who have a sound tongue but keep silence when they should defend the truth are considered as some deaf and dumb persons.

Such people neither struggle against injustice and mischief, nor do they lead the ignorant, nor do they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, nor do they invite others to the way of truth, but they apply this great bounty of Allah in the way of idle talks, backbiting, flatteries before the possessors of wealth and power, or they often make use of it for perverting the right and strengthening the falsehood.

The Qur'an counts those who have the bounties of intellect, talent, and capability, but do not contemplate properly, as some mad ones.

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 23

وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ

23. “And if Allah had known any good in them, He would have made them hear; and (even) if He had made them hear, they would have turned away, swerving aside.”

Obstinate persons are divided into several groups. Some of them are not ready even to listen to the truth. The revelation about them is recited:

“And those who disbelieved said: Do not listen to this Qur'an...” (Surah Fussilat, No. 41, verse 26)

Some of these obstinate persons listen and understand it, but they distort it.

Some others have not the ability of discrimination because of their innate extra attachments, envies, enmities and callous nesses. The verse says:

“And if Allah had known any good in them He would have made them hear; and (even) if He had made them hear, they would have turned away, swerving aside.”

Therefore, we must seek for the facilities of enjoying of Allah's grace in ourselves.

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 24

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ
اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

24. “O you who have Faith! Answer Allah and the Messenger when he invites you to that which gives you life, and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, and that unto Him you shall be gathered.”

There are different kinds of life:

1– Vegetal life:

“...Allah gives life to the earth after its death...” (Surah Al-Hadid, No. 57, verse 17)

2– Animal life:

“...the giver of life to the dead...” (Surah Fussilat, No. 41, verse 39)

3– Mental life:

“...who was dead then We raised him to life...” (Surah Al-An'am, No. 6, verse 122)

4– Eternal life:

“...O! would that I had sent before for (this) my life!” (Surah Al-Fajr, No. 89, verse 24)

The purpose of the life, which comes into being by the acceptance of the invitation of prophets, is not the animal life, since without the effects and affluence of prophets this sort of life exists, too. Then, the objective of this life is the mental, intellectual, and spiritual life.

The phrase: ‘**Allah intervenes between a man and his heart**’ indicates that Allah is aware and present everywhere, and He encompasses everything so that He is closer to us than our jugular vein is. All bounties and successes belong to Him, and the activities of intellect and soul are under His authority, too.

However, the acceptance of the Prophet's invitation is the same as the acceptance of Allah's invitation; and the real life of man lies in Faith and righteous deed, to which prophets have invited, too.

The verse says:

“O you have Faith! Answer Allah and the Messenger when he invites you to that which gives you life...”

The ordinances of Islam gives spiritual life to the believers, the same as some medicine or surgery can be life-giving to a sick person.

Going alongside the way of Allah (s.w.t) and divine prophets (as) is the real life, while abandoning it is the death of humanity.

According to the Islamic literatures, one of the aspects of goodly life is the acceptance of the call of the Prophet of Islam (S) to the subject of mastership of Ali-ibn-Abitalib (as) and his Ahl-ul-Bayt (as).¹

He who believes in Allah's omnipresence and omnipotence does not disobey the invitation of prophets. Therefore, as long as you are alive and you have respite, embrace the Truth. (According to this interpretation, the phrase ‘...**Allah intervenes between a man and his heart**’, metaphorically, means death.)

“...and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart...”

Among the aspects of the phrase: ‘**Allah intervenes between a man and his heart**’ there are: the effacement of infidelity and confirming Faith, the effacement of negligence and doubt and confirming recollection and certainty.²

All of you will be gathered on the Resurrection Day, then do respond to the invitation of prophets positively. The verse ends as follows:

“...and that unto Him you shall be gathered.”

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 25

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

25. “And keep from the evil of an affliction which shall not smite in particular those of you who committed injustice (but all of you); and know that Allah is severe in retribution.”

The content of the previous verse was upon the acceptance of the Prophet's invitation to ‘the goodly life’. Here, in this, verse, the Qur’an says if you do not accept his invitation you will be involved with an affliction whose fire encompasses everyone. The verse says:

“And keep from the evil of an affliction which shall not smite in particular those of you who committed injustice (but all of you)...”

The Arabic term /fitnah/ has been applied in the sense of idolatry, infidelity, trial, torture, and so on.

The former verse ordained to the obedience from the Prophet (S) while here, in this verse, the command is unto '**being in awe of an affliction**'. It is understood that the lack of obedience from the Prophet (S) is '**affliction**'. Thus the concept of the verse is the same concept as the Surah, Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 103, which is recited³:

“And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together, and do not separate...”

Mischief and indecency destroys the entity of a system, and its damage reaches everybody. One of the examples of this meaning was the mischief of the rulers of Umayyads. They put aside the mastership of 'the leader of the truth' and, consequently, they set the Muslims into abasement for centuries. When this verse was revealed, the Prophet (S) said:

“Whoever transgresses in Ali's vicegerency after my death, it is as if he has denied my messengership and the prophethood of the prophets before me.”⁴

Thus, the members of a society, besides their own duties, should feel responsibility for the deeds of others, since the reflections of everybody's evil actions may afflict the surrounding people, too. It is similar to the person who is inside a ship and makes a hole in it. By his action, he causes that all the people in the ship to be-drowned.

Therefore, neither you yourself make a mischief, nor adhere with the mischief makers, nor be silent when they make mischief: ***“And keep from the evil of an affliction”***; and do know that being in awe of the evil of affliction is 'awareness', not 'resignation'.

We must be aware not to be involved with the evil afflictions and disturbances when they come forth. Ali (as) says:

“During evil disturbances be like an adolescent camel that has neither a back strong enough for riding nor udders for milking.”⁵

The Prophet (S) in a tradition has said:

“When seditions appear among the community, be with Ali, although he is alone.”⁶

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 26

وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

26. “And remember when you were few, deemed weak in the land, and were fearful that people would snatch you away, but He gave you refuge (in Medina), and strengthened you with His help, and provided you with the good things (of sustenance) in order that you might be thankful.”

Once again the Quran assists Muslims to review their past history, and makes them understand both their former state and their present stage which they enjoy, so that they may catch well the concept of the lesson taught through the previous holy verses.

This verse implies that they should remember the time that they were few in number and could do nothing. They were captured in the grips of their enemies who had drawn them into weakness and incapability. It says:

“And remember when you were few, deemed weak in the land...”

They were in a state that they feared that both pagans and those who were their opponents might despoil them away. The verse says:

“...and were fearful that people would snatch you away...”

This meaning makes manifest the utmost weakness and fewness of the members of Muslims in front of pagans in Mecca before migration of the Prophet (S) to Medina, or after migration in front of the great powers of that time, like the forces of Iran and Rom.

Then, the verse continues saying:

“...but He gave you refuge (in Medina)...”

Then it adds:

“...and strengthened you with His help...”

“...and provided you with the good things (of sustenance)...”

“...in order that you might be thankful.”

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 27

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

27. “O you who have Faith! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, and do not betray your trusts knowingly.”

Occasion of Revelation

In the commentary books recorded by both great sects of Islam upon the occasion of revelation of this verse, it has been cited as follows:

When the Jewish tribe named Bani-Qurayzah were surrounded by the Muslim strivers under the command of the Prophet (S) the Jews suggested peace and started moving toward Syria.

But the Prophet (S) did not accept it, and he ordered Sa'd-ibn-Ma'ath to judge over their circumstance. The Jews consulted with 'Abul-Babah, one of the Muslims who had had the background of friendship with them, about that judgment.

When, 'Abul-Babah, by pointing to his throat, signed them that they would be killed totally if they accepted the arbitration of Sa'd-ibn-Ma'ath, Gabriel informed this signal to the Prophet (S). 'Abul-Babah, who was ashamed of this treachery, roped himself to the pillar of the mosque and avoided eating anything for seven days and nights.

Finally, Allah accepted his repentance.⁷

There has also been cited another occasion of revelation upon this verse as follows in the Battle of Badr, one of the Muslims wrote a letter to Abu-Sufyan and informed him of the Prophet's plan. Then, Abu-Sufyan asked for help from the pagans of Mecca, and they sent one thousand fighters to fight in the Battle of Badr.⁸

Now Allah commands the believers not to approach treachery. The holy verse, addressing the believing people, implies that they should not betray Allah (s.w.t) by means of abandoning His ordinances and His Messenger (S) by leaving his rules, because whoever leaves or spoils anything of the religion, he has betrayed Allah (s.w.t) and His Messenger (S). The verse says

“O you who have Faith! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger...”

Also, the believers should not be treacherous to the affairs upon which Allah has trusted them, and has given them the fulfillment of them that they accomplish them without any deficiency. Thus, he who is treacherous to Allah and the Messenger of Islam (S), has been treacherous to his own deposits.

And you know that treachery is an ugly action which incurs punishment.

The verse says:

“...and do not betray your trusts knowingly.”

Therefore, treachery is basically ugly and condemned, especially those treacheries which are performed knowingly, and the manifestation of military secrets are uglier and more dangerous, for which, and of

course the sinful person must repent very soon.

However, the spoils of war, alms, Khoms (one fifth levy), and all properties of others, which are with you, are deposits. Similarly, other bounties, such as: the school of religion, leadership, the Qur'an, children, and territorial of the country are the deposits of Allah.

And according to the tradition which Shawahid-ut-Tanzil, by Hakim Huskani, vol. 1, p. 205 has narrated from Ihqaq-ul-Haqq, vol. 14, p. 564 the progeny of the Prophet (S) are also the Divine deposits.

By obeying them and following them, we must protect these deposits.

Surah Al-Anfal – Verse 28

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

28. “And know that your wealth and your children are a (means of) trial, and that Allah – with Him is a great reward.”

Intensive love for wealth and children is the pivot of a lot of evil actions. It is the origin of many unlawful transactions, lies, monopolies, short weights, lack of payment of the alms– tax, to avoid giving Khoms (one fifth levy) and poor–rates, greeds, hindering others' affairs, false oaths, wasting the people's rights, and the like of them.

The love of children may cause a person to escape from the battle–field and not to tolerate a short separation from the family.

Then, these are the factors of trial, as explained in the previous verse. This kind of love drew 'Abul-Babah into committing wrong and, in order to protect his wealth and children, he assisted the enemy of Islam.

Therefore, regarding the occasion of revelation of the previous verse, excessive love to wealth and children causes man to fall into sin and treachery. The verse under discussion says:

“And know that your wealth and your children are a (means of) trial...”

Also, wealth and children can be two fascinating traps on the way of human beings to which the Qur'an has repeatedly warned in different ways. For example, Surah Al-Munafiqun, No. 63, verse 9 says:

“...let not your wealth, or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah...”

Being attentive to the great reward of Allah causes us to leave the love of the world and also to abandon

treachery. The verse says:

“...and that Allah – with Him is a great reward.”

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1. Recorded in Tafsir-i-Furqan, by Manaqib Tarmathy
 2. This meaning is recorded in Tafsir-i-Furqan, narrated from Imam Sadiq (as)
 3. Al-Mizan.
 4. Furqan, narrated from Shawahid- ut- Tanzil, by Huskani, vol. 1, p. 206.
 5. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, saying No. 1, p. 530, English version.
 6. Majma'ul-Bayan, vol. 4, p. 534 (Arabic version) and Tafsir-ul-Burhan
 7. Majma'ul-Bayan, and Tafsir-us-Safi
 8. Al-Mizan, and Majma'ul-Bayan

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