

Surah Bayyinah, Chapter 98

(The Clear Evidence)

Number of Verses: 8

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

The contents of the Surah attests to the fact that it was revealed in Medina, because, the People (Jews and Christians) of the Book (the Scripture) are repeatedly talked about, and we know that at the time of revelation the communication between the Muslims and the people of the Book occurred mostly in Medina.

Furthermore, the words of the Surah are both about prayers and alms. It is true that the duty of paying the alms-tax was issued in Mecca, but the act of spreading this idea with the necessary formalities, was extended in Medina.

In any case, this Surah refers to the universal message of our holy Prophet (S) in the same line of prophecy that the Jews and Christians received their scriptures. They should have prepared themselves for the Advent of the greatest and last of the prophets, but when the awaited Prophet, whom they were waiting for, came with clear signs and evidences, they rejected him, because they were not really searching for truth; they only followed their own desires to gain worldly profits.

By the way, this Surah shows the fact that the doctrine of the prophets such as Faith, monotheism, prayers and fasting are eternal and unchangeable principles in all Divine religions.

In another part of the Surah the different reactions of the pagans and the People of the Book, regarding the invitation to Islam, are referred to saying that those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best

of all creatures, and those who disbelieve and refuse to worship Him are certainly the worst of all creatures.

The most popular titles of this Surah are: 'Bayyinah', 'Lam Yakun', and 'Ghayyimah'; titles which come from the text, itself.

The Virtue in Studying Surah Bayyinah

On the virtue in reciting this Surah, there is a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) who has said:

"If people knew how blissful this Surah is (Bayyinah), they would leave their property and family to learn it".

Someone from the 'Khaza'ih' people asked:

"O Messenger of Allah! What is the reward for reciting it?"

He (S) answered:

"Neither a hypocrite nor those in whose hearts contain doubt about Allah recite it. By Allah, the near-stationed angels have been reciting it from the time the heavens and the earth were created and do not languish in its recitation.

*There will be no servant who recites it at night but that Allah sends angels who protect him in his Faith and his present life and that seek forgiveness and mercy for him; and when on the day he recites it, he will be rewarded as much as what the day sheds light upon and what the night darkens."*¹

Surah Bayyinah, Verses 1-5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ

رَسُولٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُطَهَّرَةً

فِيهَا كُتِبَ قِيمَةٌ

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَةُ

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ

1. ***“Those who reject (Truth) from among the People of the Book and the polytheists were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them Clear Evidence,”***
2. ***“A Messenger from Allah, reciting pure scriptures;”***
3. ***“Wherein are laws right and straight.”***
4. ***“Nor were those divided who were given the Book, except after the Clear Evidence had come to them.”***
5. ***“And they were ordered no more than that they should worship Allah (alone) being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, to keep up prayer, and pay zakat (poor-rate) and that is the religion right and straight.”***

The Religion Right and Straight

At the beginning of the Surah the situation before Islam, the People of the Book and the pagan Arabs, is referred to.

It says:

“Those who reject (Truth) from among the People of the Book and the polytheists were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them the Clear Evidence,”
“A Messenger from Allah, reciting pure scriptures;”
“Wherein are laws right and straight.”

Yes, they said that they were convinced of the coming of the Prophet of Islam (S), but later when his heavenly Book was revealed the circumstances changed and they differed in their ideas about the religion of Allah.

It says:

“Nor were these divided who were given the Book, except after the Clear Evidence had come to them.”

Thus, the aforementioned verses reveal that the claim of the People of the Book and the disbelievers was that they insisted on a prophet having clear evidences to accept. But, when the clear evidence, Islam, and the awaited prophet, in the person of Muhammad (S) arrived, they rejected the religion of Islam and resisted the Prophet except for a minority of them.

The preceding verse is similar to the content of Surah Baqarah, No. 2 Verse 89 which says:

"And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what if with them, although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith, when there comes to that which they (should) have recognized, they refuse to believe in it, but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith."

We know that the People of the Book expected such an Advent and too, the Pagan Arabs, who knowing the People of the Book to be more learned than themselves, customarily followed the same idea and adopted it as their own, but after reaching their goals they changed the way and joined the opponents.

A group of commentators have another idea on the contents of these verses. They say that the objective meaning is that the mentioned people, not simply by mere claim, but, in actuality, did not leave their old belief until they had clear evidences.

This statement means that after having such clear evidences they accepted the Prophet, but this contrasts with the following verses which indicate that they did not. Or, it may be said that the objective meaning is that some of them believed, though they were in the minority.

But, this idea seems improbable and perhaps it was for the same reason that Fakhr-i-Razi in his commentary considered the first verse which to him is in contrast with the next verse, one of the most complicated verses of the Qur'an and then, in order to solve the problem he gave some explanations the best of which is the very one that we have mentioned above.

A third commentary exists which says that the objective meaning is that Allah does not leave the People of the Book and disbelievers to themselves unless He completes the argument; sends them an evidence, and shows them the straight way. For this reason He sent the Messenger of Islam to guide them.

In fact, this verse is a reference to 'the principle of favor' which is discussed in 'speculative theology' and states that Allah sends clear evidences for every sect to complete the argument.

In any case, the meaning of /bayyinah/, here is 'Clear Evidence' and whose example, according to the second verse, is the Messenger of Allah (S), himself, who had at his disposal the Holy Qur'an for his teachings.

The term /suhuf/ is a plural form of /sahifah/ which means 'a leaf or page of a book', or 'some leaves of paper on which something is written' and here it means 'the contents of them', because we know that the holy Prophet (S) could not read anything from the pages and therefore, was teaching the 'contents' of them.

And the purpose of using the term /mutahharah/ is that it was exactly the very truth, the original Word of Allah, in its purity, without corruption having polluted it, and far from the evil hands of Jinn and the human race; as is mentioned in Surah Fussilat, No. 41, verse 42:

"No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it..."

Now, Verse 3

"Wherein are laws..."

refers to the fact that, in these scriptures, there are, without doubt, decrees contained therein that are right and straight.

Therefore, /kutub/, here means 'what is written', or it means 'the laws or decrees appointed by Allah', because /kitabati/, in Arabic, has been used in the sense of 'prescribing a decree' as in Surah Baqarah, No. 2, verse 183:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may learn self-restraint."

Then, the term /qayyimah/ means 'smooth, straight, right, strong, confirmed, valuable, worthy' or all these meanings collectively.

It is also probable that since the Qur'an contains all that the former scriptures had, besides many other additional points, then, it is said that therein are the right ordinances of the past.

It is worthy to note that in the first verse 'the People of the Book' is mentioned prior to 'the polytheists' but, in the fourth verse only 'the People of the Book' is mentioned and while 'polytheists' is not stated, the verse refers to both of them.

Apparently, these differences may be for that, in this matter, the People of the Book were the main rejectors and the polytheists were their dependants; or for that the People of the Book deserved more blame, because they had many men of knowledge among them and had a higher standard of theology than the polytheists therefore, their rejection was more disgraceful and blameworthy.

Then, the Qur'an reproaches 'the People of the Book' and the polytheists saying:

"And they were ordered no more than that they should worship Allah (alone) being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and to keep up prayer, and pay zakat (poor-rate) and that is the religion right and straight."

On the phrase

/wa ma umirul "and they were ordered no more",

some have cited that the purpose of using this phrase is that the People of the Book already had the three eternal principles in their own religion: Unity of God, prayer, and alms. These are some fixed principles, but those people were not true to their promise concerning these principles.

Furthermore, the same decrees, in Islam, are, also, pure monotheism, prayer and alms which are the same eternal principles. So, why did they refuse to accept them?

Using this phrase, then, seems more suitable, because, /umiru/ 'ordered', refers to the acceptance of the new religion, that which was mentioned in the preceding verse, over which 'they divided'.

Some of the commentators believe that using the word /din/ 'religion', here means 'worship' and the phrase 'no more than that they should worship Allah (alone)', confirms this idea.

The term /hunafa/ is the plural form of /hanif /derived from /hanaf/ 'pure in faith' and as Raqib cites in Mufradat it means 'to decline from aberration to the straight way'. All those who make pilgrimage to Kaaba or were circumcised were called /hanif/, by the Arabs, referring to the fact that they had believed in Abraham's religion.

On the whole, this word in lexicology and in various dictionaries originally means 'crookedness or inclination', but, in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions it has been used with the sense of 'declining from polytheism and inclining toward monotheism and the straight way'.

The phrase 'the religion right and straight' denotes that those principles, i.e., pure monotheism, prayers and alms, are eternal and unchangeable in all religions, or it can be said that they are found within the nature of all human beings.

So, the destiny of Man leads him to monotheism and his nature invites him to being grateful to his Lord, knowing His divine essence, and further, Man's social spirit calls him to the service of the deprived by practicing deeds of charity.

Therefore, the root of these characteristics, in general, exists in all humans and that is why these laws are also found in the teachings of all the former prophets and are the core in the teachings of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (S).

Surah Bayyinah, Verses 6-8

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ

جَزَاءُ لَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ

6. "Surely those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the polytheists shall be in the fire of Hell, therein dwelling forever; they are the worst of all creatures."

7. "Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creatures."

8. "Their reward with their Lord will be Gardens of eternity, beneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever; Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord and Cherisher."

The Best and the Worst Creatures

In the former verses, it was mentioned that the people of the Book and the polytheists were waiting for clear evidence to be sent by Allah, but when it came they were dispersed and everyone went his separate way.

In the following verses, from the point of Faith in truth, people are divided into two groups believers and disbelievers, and then the fate of each is pointed out.

At first it says:

"Surely those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the polytheists shall be in the fire of Hell, therein dwelling forever, they are the worst of all creatures."

The term /kafaru/ 'they disbelieved', here refers to their blasphemy rather than their being Muslim, otherwise their previous infidelity was not a new matter.

The phrase

"They are the worst of all creatures"

is a startling statement which shows that among all the living and non-living creatures there is nothing worse than those who left the right path and went astray after the truth became clear and the argument and reason became complete.

This is, in fact, like that which is mentioned in Surah Anfal, No. 8, verse 22:

"For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb. Those who understand not".

Or similar still, to what Surah A'raf, No. 7, verse 179 says after referring to the people of Hell with the same characteristics:

"...they are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning)".

There is also a point in the current verse which goes beyond these matters, because it introduces them as

“The worst of all creatures”,

and this is, indeed, a statement of evidence for their perpetual stay in the fire of Hell.

And why not! They were the worst of all creatures, because all the means of salvation were being prepared for them, but they refused it intentionally, due to their pride, deceit and enmity.

In this verse, again, the phrase 'the People of Book' is mentioned prior to 'polytheists' perhaps for the reason that they had heavenly Books and learned men among them and also possessed some signs and information about the Prophet of Islam which were clearly mentioned in their Books. Therefore, their rejection was more hideous and indecent.

In the next verse, the contrasting group, who are in a higher position, are referred to.

It says:

“Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creatures.”

Then their rewards are pointed out:

“Their rewards with their Lord will be Gardens of eternity, beneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever; Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord and Cherisher”.

This high rank and the splendid, unparalleled rewards are for the one who fears his Lord:

“That is for him who fears his Lord and Cherisher”.

It is worthy to note that when speaking about the righteous, it also mentions 'doing good deeds', which is in fact the fruit of Faith, and indicates that a mere claim of Faith is not enough. Man's conduct should adapt to this Faith, too. But blasphemy itself even with the lack of evil action causes aberration in Man and this is apart from the fact that blasphemy is usually the source of many kinds of sin, crimes, and wrong actions.

The phrase:

“They are the best of all creatures”

clearly shows that good believing people who do righteous deeds are even higher than the angels, because the verse is general and there is no exception made in it.

There are other verses, also, that are witness to this idea like the verses concerning the prostration of the angels to Adam, and the verse:

“We have honoured the sons of Adam...”²

However, in this verse, the material and physical rewards of the righteous; gardens full of different blessings in Heaven, are mentioned first, and then, their spiritual reward is referred to, that is;

"...Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him"

They are well-pleased with Allah because whatever they have asked of Him, He has given them and if they erred He forgave them by His Grace. What pleasure can be better or higher than that one feels that his beloved, his Lord, accepts him and is pleased with him and he succeeds to be close to Him.

Yes, the Paradise, for Man's body, is the eternal Gardens of the next world, but the Paradise for his soul is the Lord's pleasure.

The sentence:

"That is for him who fears his Lord and Cherisher"

shows that all these gifts come into being because of the existence of the 'fear of Allah' since it is the motive of all obedience, piety, and righteous deeds.

It should also be noted that the 'fear of Allah' is the fear to offend His holy Law, the fear to do anything which is against His holy Will. Such fear is akin to love; for with it dawns the consciousness of Allah's loving care for all His creatures.

Some of the commentators have combined this verse with Surah Fatir, No. 35, Verse 28:

"...those truly fear Allah among His servants, who have knowledge...";

and have concluded that Paradise is, in fact, the incontestable right of the scientists and learned people.

Of course, regarding the fact that the 'fear of Allah' has stages and degrees as well as knowledge, which has hierarchies too, the meaning of this statement is clear.

By the way, some believe that the position of /xasiyat/ is higher than that of /xauf/ because the latter is used for any fear, but the former is a kind of fear mixed with exaltation and respect.

Explanation: Hazrat Ali (as) and His Followers are 'the Best Creatures'

There are a great many narrations quoted by famous Sunnite and Shi'ite sources in which the verse:

"...they are the best of all creatures"

is rendered to mean Hazrat Ali (as) and his followers.

Hakim Haskani Neyshaburi, one of the famous Sunnite scholars, in the fifth century A.H., has cited some narrations with different references whose number is more than twenty in his well-known book

Shawahid-ut-Tanzil.

The following are some examples:

1. Ibn-Abbas says that when the verse:

"Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creatures"

was revealed, the holy Prophet (S) told Hazrat Ali (as):

"It is you and your followers who will come on the Day of Reckoning when you and your followers are well-pleased (yourselves) and well-pleasing Him and your enemy will come angrily pushed (into Hell)".³

2. Abu Barazah has narrated a tradition from the Prophet (S) who recited the verse and said:

"They are you and your followers. O' Ali! The appointment for you and me is (beside) the Pool of Abundance"⁴

('Haud' is the pool of 'Kawthar').

3. Jabir-ibn-'Abdillah-Ansari narrates in another tradition that they were sitting with the holy Prophet (S) in the Sacred House when Ali (as) came to them.

As soon as the Prophet (S) saw him, he said:

"My brother is coming to you".

Then, he turned toward the Ka'ba and said:

"By the Lord of this Structure! Surely this man and his followers will be triumphant on the Day of Judgement".

Then, he addressed them and added:

"By Allah! Truly he was foremost to all of you in believing in Allah; and among you all he is the most correct in obeying Allah; the most faithful in fulfilling the covenant of Allah; the hardest to the decree of Allah, the best distributor of the (treasury) in equality, the justest to the citizen and the most important in position with Allah".

Jabir said it was then that Allah sent down the verse:

"Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creatures",

and from then on whenever Ali came, the Helpers of the Prophet (S) would say:

"The best of all creatures next to the Messenger of Allah came".⁵

The descent of this verse, in Mecca, does not contrast with the idea that the Surah is Medinan, because it might have been revealed, again, there. Further, the descent of this verse might have happened on one of the holy Prophet's trips from Medina to Mecca, in particular that the reporter of the narration is 'Jabir-ibn-'Abdillah-Ansari' who joined the Prophet (S) in Medina. Then, terming these kinds of verses 'Medinan' is not improbable.

Some of these traditions are cited by 'Ibn-Hijr' in 'Sawa'iq' and some others by 'Muhammad Shablanji' in 'Nur-ul-Absar'. [6](#)

A great part of the last narration is narrated from Ibn-'Asakir, from Jabir-ibn-'Abdillah by Jalal-id-Din-Suyuti in Durr-ul-Manthur.

4. It is narrated from Ibn-'Abbas in Durr-ul-Manthur that when the verse.

“Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creature.”

was revealed the holy Prophet (S) told Ali:

“It is you and your followers who, on the Day of Reckoning are well-pleased (yourselves) and well-pleasing (Him).” [7](#)

5. In another tradition, the above mentioned person narrates from Ibn-Marduyah from Hazrat Ali (as) that the Prophet (S) had told him (Ali):

“Have you not heard the word of Allah:

'Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of all creature'?

You and your followers are those and the appointment place of mine and yours will be at the Pool of Abundance'. When I come for the account of nations you will be invited in the case that your foreheads are white (to be known)”.[8](#)

Many other Sunnite scholars have also cited the same meaning in their works including: Khatib Kharazmi in 'Manaqib', Abu-Na'im Isfahani in 'Kifayat -ul -Khisam', 'Allamah Tabari in his famous commentary, Tabari, Ibn- Shabbaq Maliki in 'Fusul-ul-Muhimmah', Allamah Shoukani in 'Fath-ul-Qadir', Shaykh Sulayman Qanduzi in 'Yanabi' -ul- Mawwadah', Alusi in 'Ruh -ul -Ma'ani', and some others.

In conclusion, the above mentioned tradition is one of the famous traditions that is accepted by a great many scholars of Islam. And this, in itself, is an important, matchless excellence for Hazrat Ali (as) and his followers.

By the way, this narration makes this fact clear that the term 'Shi'ah' was applied and was spread among Muslims by the Prophet (S), himself, at that time, and it refers to the particular followers of Amir-al-Mo'mineen Ali (as).

The Necessity of Intention in Adorations

Some of the scholars of the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence have taken the verse:

"And they were ordered no more than that they should worship Allah (alone) being sincere to Him in obedience..."

as an evidence for (niyyat) 'intention' with divine motive being necessary in 'worship' and this depends on the word 'din', here to be meant 'worship' so that it becomes a reason for the necessity of sincerity in worship.

We should also take the term

lamrl, 'command'

in this verse, unlimited in order to have a sense of necessity of intention with divine motive in all commands. However, the meaning of the verse does not seem to be either of them, but the purpose of the verse is to prove monotheism in contrast with polytheism. It means they are only invited to monotheism.

The Wonderful Heights and Depths to Which Man Can Reach

We understand, clearly, from the verses of this Surah that there is no creature in the world like, Man to be able to gain the highest ranks and being the best of all by doing righteous deeds, (note that 'righteous deeds' includes all good deeds; not only a part of them), and if he goes on the path of blasphemy and aberration he will fall so deep that he can be the worst of all creatures.

The vast, great distance between these two extremes of highness and lowliness of Man; although a very sensitive and dangerous status for him, indicates his dignity and capability of development. It is natural that Man, with such an efficiency and extraordinary potentiality, is also quite close to the possibility of extraordinary aberration.

Supplication

O Lord! We look to You, Your Grace, to gain the high rank of "The best of all creatures".

O Lord! Count us among the followers of the man who deserves this title the best.

O Lord! Endow us with such a sincerity that we worship and love nothing but You.

1. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 521

2. Surah Bani Israel, No. 17, verse. 70

3. Shawahid-ut-Tanzil, vol. 2, p. 357, tradition 1126.

4. Shawahid-ut-Tanzil, vol. 2, p. 359, tradition 1130.

- [5.](#) Shawahid-ut- Tanzil, vol 2, p 362, tradition 1139
- [6.](#) al-Sawa'iq ul Muharraqah, p 96, and Nur-ul-Absar, p 70, 101
- [7.](#) Durr-ul Manthur, vol 6, p 379
- [8.](#) Ibid

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