

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

***Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or per-forms 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both; and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, All-knowing (158).***

## General Comment

The Safa and the Marwah are two places in Mecca between which a pilgrim has to perform *as-sa'y* (السَّعْيُ) = the ceremony of walking quickly seven times between the Safa and the Marwah, during the *hajj* and the *'umrah*; literally to move quickly, to run).

These are two hills, the distance between them reportedly being 760½ arm. *as-Safa* (الصَّفَا) = hard smooth rock); *al-Marwah* (المَرْوَةُ) = hard stone). *ash-Sha'a'ir* (الشَّعَائِرُ) is the plural of *ash-sha'irah* (الشَّعِيرَةُ) = sign); from it is derived the word *al-mash'ar* (المَشْعَرُ) = the *hajj* station, east of Mecca); also they say, *ash'ara 'l-hady* (أَشْعَرَ الْهَدْيِ) = he marked or branded the sacrificial animal).

*Al-Hajj* (الْحَجُّ) literally means repeated intention; in Islamic terminology it refers to the special rites collectively known as Pilgrimage of Mecca. *al-I'timar* (الإِعْتِمَارُ) means to visit; it is derived from *al-'imarah* (الْعِمَارَةُ) = building) because buildings thrive by visits; in Islamic language it refers to the so-called “lesser pilgrimage” to the Ka'bah, which unlike the *hajj*, need not be performed at a particular time and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies.

*al-Junah* (الْجُنَاحُ) is deviation from truth and justice; it is used for sin and misdemeanour; thus, negation of sin or blame implies permission. *at-Tatawwuf* (التَّطَوُّفُ) is derived from *at-tawf* (الطَّوْفُ), that is, to make the rounds.

It denotes a round trip, that is, a journey or walk that ends at its starting point; it need not necessarily be a circumambulation around something (although circumambulation is more obvious application of the word); it is the former meaning in which it has been used in this verse – it refers to *as-sa'y*, that is,

walking between the Safa and the Marwah seven times consecutively.

*At-Tatawwu'* (التَطَوُّعُ) is derived from *at-taw'* (الطَّوْعُ) = to do a walk willingly and gladly). Some people differentiate between *at-tatawwu'* and *al-ita'ah* (الإِطَاعَةُ) and say that the former, unlike the latter, is exclusively used for voluntarily done good deeds.

If correct, this assertion might be based on the view that the obligatory deeds – because of their obligatoriness – are probably not done willingly, unlike the voluntary and recommended actions which are done willingly by one's own accord.

But it is a far-fetched interpretation. In fact, *at-taw'* (الطَّوْعُ) is opposite of *al-kurh* (الْكُرْهُ) = dislike), and is not irreconcilable with obligatory deeds. Allah says:

... **so He said to it** (i.e., the heaven) **and to the earth: "Come both, willingly or unwillingly"** (41:11).

The characteristic meaning of the paradigm *at-tafa'ul* (التَّفَعُّلُ) is to take to oneself, for example, *tamayyaza* (تَمَيَّزَ) = he took on distinguishing), *ta'allama* (تَعَلَّمَ) = he took on learning); in the same way *tatawwa'a* (تَطَوَّعَ) means, he took on doing good willingly.

In short, *at-tatawwu'* is not reserved, from the linguistic point of view, for voluntary, non-obligatory good deed – unless credit is given to the usage of the common people.

## Commentary

**Qur'an: Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah... to go round them both:**

The two hills are marked by the signs of Allah; they lead accordingly to Him and remind one of Him.

They have been especially counted "among the signs of Allah" to the exclusion of other things; it shows that the word, "the signs" has not been used here in the sense in which every created thing is a sign of the Creator.

They are the Divine Signs because Allah has made them so, by appointing them as the places of His worship; thus they remind one of Allah, the Creator. They are the signs for which Allah has prescribed especial rites of worship.

Then comes the next sentence: "so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs *umrah* thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both. The word "so" in the beginning shows that it is an offshoot of the preceding sentence.

Its import is to show that walking quickly between these two hills is a part of the Islamic *shari'ah* – it does not imply that the said walking is voluntary or non-obligatory.

If Allah had wanted to declare its voluntariness, it would have been more appropriate to praise and extol

*as-sa'y*, rather than saying that there was no blame in it. The gist of the meaning is that – because the Safa and the Marwah were among the places of the worship of Allah – it would do you no harm to worship Him therein.

And it is the language of legislation. If Allah had wanted to show only its desirability, He would have said that, because the two hills were among the signs of Allah, He likes you to go round them.

Frequently, when the Qur'an wants to ordain an obligatory law, it uses such expressions which by themselves do not show obligatoriness. For example, Allah says regarding *jihad*;

***that is better for you*** (61:11);

regarding fast:

***and that you fast is better for you*** (2:184),

and regarding shortening of prayer:

***And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer*** (4:101).

**Qur'an: and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, All-knowing:**

The conjunctive “and” may be joining this sentence to any of the three phrases in the preceding one: –

It may connect it with “so whoever makes a pilgrimage...”. In that case it would show a more general reason for the legislation of the walking between the two hills, after giving the particular reason, that is, “Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah.”

According to this interpretation, “doing good on one's own accord” would mean “obedience” in general term, and not a voluntary deed.

It may be starting a new sentence, joining it to the words in the beginning of the verse. In that case, “doing good on one's own accord” would refer to the “going round the two hills”. Thus it would show only the desirability of *as-sa'y* (walking quickly seven times between Safa and the Marwah).

Alternatively, the phrase “doing good on one's own according” may be referring to the *hajj* and the *'umrah*, and the phrase would show the desirability of these two rites of worship.

*Ash-Shakir* (الشَّاكِرُ) = Grateful) and *al-'Alim* (الْعَلِيمُ) = All-knowing) are two of the beautiful names of Allah. *ash-Shukr* (الشُّكْرُ) = gratefulness, thankfulness). When a beneficiary returns the benevolence of the benefactor by announcing it in words and/ or deeds, it is called gratefulness.

Someone gives you a property, and in return you praise him mentioning his benevolence, or use that property in a way he likes – and thus you show your gratefulness to him.

Now, Allah is the Beneficent; His beneficence is eternal and all beneficence begins from Him; none can oblige Him in any way so that He would be grateful to that person. Yet, He, in His benevolence, looks at His creatures' good deeds as though the creatures have been beneficent to Him by doing those deeds (although, in reality the case is diametrically different; the creatures' good deeds are actually His benefaction to them).

And thus he repays those good deeds with gratefulness and benevolence, which in fact is a double benevolence. Allah says:

***Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?*** (55:60);

***Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving shall be recompensed*** (76:22).

Thus, the name "Grateful" is used for Allah in its real, not allegorical sense.

## Traditions

One of our companions has narrated this tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says: "I asked him about walking between the Safa and the Marwah whether it was obligatory or voluntary. He said: 'Obligatory.' I said: 'Does not Allah say: ***so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both?***'

He said: 'It was in the 'umrah of Qada'1; that is, the Messenger of Allah (S) had stipulated with them (i.e., the pagans of Mecca) that they would remove the idols (for the period of 'umrah); and one of his companions was engaged otherwise until the idols were returned (to their places): (The Imam) said:

'Then Allah revealed: ***Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both, i.e., even when there were idols on them.***'" (al-'Ayyashi)

**The author says:** A nearly similar tradition is found in *al-Kafi*.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) says describing the *hajj* of the Prophet: "After circumambulating around the House and praying its two *rak'ahs*, (the Prophet) recited: ***Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah.*** (Then he said:)

'So I shall begin with that which Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with (i.e., from the Safa).' And verily the Muslims used to think that walking between the Safa and the Marwah was something invented by the polytheists; so Allah revealed:

***Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both.***" (*al-Kafi*)

**The author says:** Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two traditions regarding the reason of the revelation of the verse. The words of the Prophet, “I shall begin with that which Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with”, show the basis of legislation.

We have narrated, in the story of Hajar and her running seven times between the Safa and the Marwah, that the ritual of *as-sa'y* started from that.

'Amir ash-Sha'bi said: “There was an idol, called *Asaf*, on the Safa, and another, called *Na'ilah*, on the Marwah. The people of (the days of) ignorance, after circumambulating the House, used to walk between the two (hills) and touch and wipe the two idols.

When the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) arrived at Mecca, they (i.e., the Muslims) said: 'O Messenger of Allah! (As for) the Safa and the Marwah, surely the walking around them was done because of the two idols, and walking around them is not among the signs (of Allah).'

Then Allah revealed: ***Surely the Safa and the Marwah...*** Thus, He (especially) mentioned the Safa because of the idol that was on it, and affirmed the Marwah because of the idol that rose from it.” (*ad-Durru '1-manthur*)

**The author says:** Both sects have narrated numerous traditions having the above-mentioned themes. Their implication is that the verse was revealed in the year when the Muslims performed the *hajj*, while the Chapter of the Cow is the first one revealed at Medina.

It may therefore be inferred that the verses are unconnected with the preceding verses (of the *qiblah*) which were revealed, as described earlier, in the second year of *hijrah*; nor are they related to the verses in the beginning of the chapter which were revealed in the first year of *hijrah*. It shows that the verses were revealed in various contexts, not in one.

1. In the 7th year of hijrah. (tr.)

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