

## Suratul Baqarah: Verses 159 – 162

(١٥٩) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعِينُونَ

(١٦٠) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

(١٦١) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

(١٦٢) خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ

**Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear for men in the Book, these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too) (159),**

**Except those who repent and amend and make manifest (the truth), these it is to whom I turn (mercifully), and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful (160).**

**Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all (161);**

***Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite*** (162).

## Commentary

**Qur'an: *Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed:*** Obviously “the guidance” means that knowledge and *shari'ah* which the Divine Religion contains, and which lead the followers to the eternal bliss; and “the clear proofs” means the verses, signs and the arguments which are the clear evidence, proofs and attestations for the truth – the truth that is guidance.

“The clear proofs”, as used in the Divine Speech, is a special description for the revealed verses.

Therefore, concealing the clear proofs may mean hiding the verses themselves from the people; or concealing their true meaning through misinterpretation and misapplication – as the leaders of the Jews did with the verses prophesying the advent of the Prophet. What the people did not know, they concealed; and what they knew, they misinterpreted and diverted it from the Prophet.

**Qur'an: *after We made it clear for men:*** It shows that they concealed the truth after Allah made it clear for all the mankind, not only for the Jews. It is not feasible, in the prevalent world system, to explain a thing to each and every person individually – not only in revelation but in every general announcement.

As a general rule, only a few persons are informed of the matter directly, and it is through them that the rest of the people get the information; he who is present conveys the message to the absent persons; the learned one explains it to the ignorant. The knowledgeable man is counted as one of the links to convey the message, like the tongue and speech.

When a learned man, bound by the pledge taken from him, explains the message to others, he makes the truth clear to the people. If he hides his knowledge, he keeps the truth concealed from the people, after it was made clear to them.

And, as Allah has said, it is the only thing which has made people differ in matters of religion, and has diverted them from the path of guidance to that of misguidance. Otherwise, religion conforms with nature; human nature agrees with it and discerning mind surrenders to it when it is properly explained.

Allah says:

***Then set your face uprightly for the*** (right) ***religion in natural devotion*** (to the truth); ***the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration*** (by anyone else) ***in the creation of Allah; that is the right*** (established) ***religion, but most people do not know*** (30:30).

So, the religion is natural; nature can never resist it, if it appears before it with some clarity, either because of the purity of the recipient's heart, as is the case of the prophets, or because it is explained properly – the latter method invariable always depends on the former.

That is why the above–quoted verse combines the two premises: the naturalness of religion and lack of its knowledge. It says: ***the nature made by Allah in which He has made men***; and then says: ***but most people do not know***.

Again Allah says:

***Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves... (2:213).***

It shows that difference about the contents of the book emanates from the revolt of the scholars who already have its knowledge. Religious differences and deviations from the right path are caused by the revolt of the religious scholars as they conceal the revealed truth, misinterpret it and alter it; and because of their injustice.

That is how “injustice” will be defined on the Day of Resurrection. Allah says:

***Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust, who hinder (people) from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked... (7:44 – 5).***

There are many verses of the same theme.

Clearly, the verse under discussion (***Surely those who conceal the clear proofs...***) is based on the above–quoted verse:

***Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves... (2:213).***

And it points to the recompense of that revolt in the next sentence, “these it is whom Allah does curse...”

***Qur'an: these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too).*** It describes the punishment of those who revolt against truth and hide the Book and the guidance which Allah has sent down.

The punishment is the curse by Allah and the curse by those who curse. The word “curse” has been repeated because the curse of Allah is different from the curse of those who curse. The curse by Allah is removal from mercy and bliss, and that by those who curse is praying to Allah to remove the cursed one from that mercy and bliss.

There is no restriction at all on the curse of Allah or the curse of those who curse, nor is there any

limitation on “those who curse”. This generality shows that every curse by anyone who curses is actually directed to those revolters and concealers of the Divine Proof and Guidance. And reason supports this view: The aim of the curse is to remove the cursed one from happiness and bliss; and there is no real happiness and bliss except the religious one.

As this real religious bliss is fully explained by Allah and accepted by nature, no one can be deprived of it except the one who rejects and denies it. This deprivation is confined to him who knows it and then knowingly rejects it.

It does not affect him who did not know the said religious bliss and to whom it was not clarified. Allah has taken pledge from learned people to spread their knowledge and to publish whatever Divine proofs and guidance they had received.

If they conceal it and hold it back, then in effect they have rejected it. Therefore, “these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too)”. This explanation is further supported by the following verse: “Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all.”

Apparently, the particle *inna* (إِنَّ) = surely) coming at the beginning of the verse gives the reason, or intensifies the theme, of the verse under discussion, by repeating its meaning in other words, “Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers...”

***Qur’an: Except those who repent... the Merciful:*** It is the exception from the preceding verse. It qualifies their repentance with amending and making manifest the truth. They must make their previous behaviour known; they must announce their repentance.

In other words, they must announce to the people what they were concealing of the truth, and also make it known that previously they had concealed it. Otherwise, it will be as though they have not repented yet – because they are still hiding the fact of their previous concealment of the truth.

***Qur’an: Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all.*** It alludes to their persistence in disbelief and their obstinate and stubborn refusal to accept the truth.

(If a man does not accept the true religion, not because of obstinacy and arrogance, but because it was not made clear to him, then in reality he is not a disbeliever, he is *al-mustad’af* (المُسْتَضْعَفُ) = weak; according to Islamic terminology, a man who does not have true faith, but is not inimical to it]; his judgment is in the hand of Allah.)

This theme is supported by the fact that most of the verses describing the disbelief qualify it with “belying”. Look especially at the verses of the descent of Adam, containing the first law legislated for the mankind:

***We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And (as to) those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of fire, in it they shall abide."*** (2:39–40)

Likewise, in this verse the words, "Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers," refer to those who obstinately belie the signs and guidance of Allah – those who conceal what Allah has revealed. And Allah describes their recompense in these words: "these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all".

It is a Divine Decree that every curse by anyone from among the angels or men, without any exception, shall be attached to them only. In this respect they are like the Satan, when Allah told him:

***And surely on you is curse until the Day of Judgment*** (15:35).

Thus, Allah made him the target of every curse from whatever source it may emanate. Likewise, these learned persons who conceal their knowledge are partners of Satan in this general and unrestricted curse.

See how hard is the tone of this verse, and how formidable its theme! We shall write something related to it, Allah willing, under the verse:

***That Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into the hell; these it is that are the losers.*** (8:37).

***Qur'an: Abiding in it (i.e., in the curse), their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite.*** The word "curse", has been changed here to "chastisement"; it shows that the curse shall be converted into their chastisement on that Day.

In these verses, the references to Allah have been changed several times from the first person to the third and vice versa. The verse begins with the first person pronouns: "We revealed", "We made it clear"; then the style changes, mentioning Allah by name, "Allah does curse".

The change was affected because the theme demands show of intense displeasure, and the greater the name of the displeased person, the more severe the effect of the displeasure – and none is greater than Allah.

Therefore, the action of the curse was attributed to Him by name, to give it the most vehement force. Then the reference was again changed to the first person pronouns, "I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy)..." It was done to show the highest mercy and benevolence of Allah – every adjective is discarded, all attributes are set aside and "I Myself return to them mercifully".

You will appreciate the difference if you read this sentence thus: These it is to whom Allah turns

mercifully; or thus: These it is to whom their Lord turns mercifully. Obviously, these sentences do not show that high degree of mercy that reflects from this sentence, “these it is to whom I turn (mercifully)”.

The next verse again discards the pronoun for the Divine Name, “these it is on whom is the curse of Allah”; and the reason is the same as was explained for the change in the first verse.

## Traditions

One of our companions has narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says: “I said to him: ‘Tell me about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the High: **Surely those who conceal...**’. He said: ‘We are meant by it – and to Allah is the resort for help.

When (*Imamah*) comes to one of us (i.e., the Imams), he has no authority (or, choice) but to make it clear for the men who will be (Imam) after him.’ ” (al- ‘Ayyashi)

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said about this verse: ”(Allah) means us by it, and to Allah is the resort for help.” Muhammad ibn Muslim said: ”(The Imam) said: ‘These are the People of the Book.’ ”

The author says: All these traditions are based on the principle of the flow of the Qur’an and its application. Otherwise, the verse is general.

Some traditions quote ‘Ali (a.s.) as saying: “Its interpretation is the learned people when they are depraved.”

The Prophet said about this verse: “Whoever is asked about knowledge which he has got, and he conceals it, he shall be reined on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle of fire; and it is (the import of) His words, **these it is whom Allah does curse and those who curse do curse them (too)**.” (*Majma‘u ‘l-bayan*)

The author says: These two traditions confirm what we have written in the \$\$\$SUB[-Commentary] Commentary.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allah, *and those who curse do curse them (too)*: “We are those (who curse); and they say that it means the vermins of the earth.” (al-‘Ayyashi )

**The author says:** The explanation given by the Imam reminds one of the import of the verse:

**... and the witnesses shall say: “These are they who lied against their Lord.” Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust (11:18).**

The Imams are the witnesses, allowed by Allah to speak on the Day of Judgment, who speak the right thing. The Imam also mentioned some people’s explanation that **those who curse** refers to the vermins of the earth. This interpretation is attributed to the exegetes like Mujahid, ‘Ikrimah and others; and some

traditions ascribe it to the Prophet.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: about the verse, ***Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance***, (that it means the proofs and guidance) “regarding 'Ali.” (*ibid.*)

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