

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 172 – 176

(١٧٢) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُّوْ مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانُهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

(١٧٣) إِنَّمَا حَرَمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ أَضْطَرَ غَيْرَ بَاغِ لَوْلَا عَادَ فَلَا إِثْمٌ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

(١٧٤) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَسْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا الْنَّارُ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

(١٧٥) أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَقُوا الظُّلَلَةَ بِالْهُدَى وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرُهُمْ عَلَى الْنَّارِ

(١٧٦) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَخْتَافُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ

O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if Him it is that you worship (172).

He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and that over which any other (name) than (that of Allah has been invoked; but whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (173).

Surely those who cancel what Allah has revealed of the Book and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement (174).

These are they who have bought error for the guidance, and chastisement for forgiveness; Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire (175).

This is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth; and surely those who differ in (matter of) **the Book are in a great opposition** (176).

Commentary

Qur'an: O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with: The preceding verses were addressed to the "men" in general; now a selected group among them (i.e., the believers) is especially spoken to.

Thus, this talk issues forth from the preceding one. It seems as though Allah is turning away from an intractable and self-opinioned group that was impervious to reason, and looks towards those who would listen to, and accept the call of, the Speaker, because they believe in Him.

The difference in the two speeches springs from the change of the audience. The believers were expected to accept what was said to them. Therefore, they were told to "eat from the good things that We have provided you with". The expression is more loving than the previous impersonal phrase addressed to the general public: "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth".

The loving expression of the verse under discussion paves the way for the direction that they should be thankful to Allah alone, because they are monotheists, they do not worship anyone other than Allah. It was for this very reason that Allah said, "that We have provided you with", and did not say, 'what you have been provided with', or "what is in the earth".

The Qur'anic expression (in active voice) shows that Allah is known to them and near them, is affectionate and compassionate to them.

The Arabic phrase translated as "the good things that We have provided you with", would be literally translated as 'the good things of what We have provided you with' – in genitive case. Apparently the adjective (*the good things*) is the first construct, related to the second construct (*what We have provided you with*); and means in effect, 'eat from Our sustenance that is all good'.

This meaning is appropriate in this context which is meant to show Allah's kindness and compassion for the believers. The phrase is not meant to restrict the second construct with the first one. In other words, it does not mean, 'eat from the good provisions, not from the bad ones': because such meaning would be quite irrelevant in this setting in which Allah wishes to remove prohibition, telling them not to abstain from any provision given by Allah – as, such behaviour would be a self-imposed unauthorized legislation, would be a talk without knowledge.

Qur'an: and give thanks to Allah if Him it is that you worship: Apparently it should have been 'give thanks to Us', but the Qur'an says, "give thanks to Allah". This expression is more appropriate for the theme of monotheism which the verse leads to.

And for the same reason the next phrase, “if Him it is that you worship”, was preferred to a shorter, ‘if you worship Him’. The present expression restricts and confines the worship to Allah alone.

Qur'an: He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked: Invoking any name other than Allah's, means slaughtering for any thing other than Allah, for example, sacrificing for idols.

Qur'an: But whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor exceeding the limit: That is, when he is not unjust, nor does he exceed the limit; is driven to it because of emergency. The meaning is therefore as follows:

Whoever is forced to eat some of these forbidden things, because of some emergency, while he does not like at all to go against the law of Allah, nor does he exceed the limit, there shall be no blame on him.

But if he was trapped into that emergency because of his own revolting behaviour or because he had exceeded the limit and was then driven to that necessity, then he is not allowed to eat from these things.

The sentence, “surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful,” shows that the above permission is just a concession given by Allah to the believers; otherwise, the basis of prohibition is present even in this case.

Qur'an: Surely those who conceal what Allah has revealed of the Book: It is an allusion to the People of the Book. There were many good and lawful things – in the rites of worship and other matters – which their elders and leaders had arbitrarily forbidden them – while they had got the Book and that Book contained no sanction against those good things.

These people did not conceal what they did but only because they wanted to protect their high position and prestige in the community, and because they did not like to stem the flow of gifts, riches and properties which their power supposedly entitled them to.

This verse unambiguously proves that a man's deeds are embodied and assume the form of a body; and it is the deeds that finally emerge as their own results. In this verse, Allah first says that their action of taking a small price for the Divine Revelation is one and the same with their eating the fire into their bellies.

Then the description of their concealing and price taking is changed to that of buying error for the guidance; then this gives way to bartering chastisement for forgiveness. Then it ends on the words, “Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire”. Thus, their misdeed itself is transformed into the fire, although what they had done was to conceal the revelation and to continue on that behaviour.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, **but whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor**

exceeding the limit: 'al-Baghi' (الباغي = revolting) is one who desires hunting¹, and al-'adi (العادي = exceeding the limit) is thief.

They are not allowed to eat dead (animal) even if they are faced with emergency. It is forbidden to them. This (concession) does not cover them as it does (other) Muslims. And they are not allowed to shorten the prayer (in such journeys)." (*al-Kafi*)

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "*al-Baghi* is unjust and *al-'adi* is usurper." (*al-'Ayyashi*)

Hammad narrates from the same Imam that he said: "*al-Baghi* is one who revolts against the Imam, and *al-'adi* is thief."

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) have said: "Not revolting against the Imam of the Muslims, nor transgressing the path of the righteous ones with disobedience." (*Majma'u1-bayan*)

The author says: All these are various applications of these words; and they support the meaning we have given earlier.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, ***Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire:*** " (It means,) how bold they are to commit the deeds which, they know, will take them to the fire." (*al-Kafi*)

'Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about this sentence: "How daring they are to (risk) the fire." (*Majma'u1-bayan*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "How active they are in the deeds of the people of the fire."

The author says: These traditions are in fact similar in their meanings: The first tradition explains boldness for fire with boldness in perpetrating the causes of the fire; the second one gives its meaning as daring to enter the fire; the third one interprets it as boldness to commit sins that would lead to the fire – and it is almost the same with the meaning of the first tradition.

¹. Another meaning of al-bagli is “desirous”; the explanation in the tradition is based on this meaning. (tr.)

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