

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 183–185

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

(۱۸۳) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

(۱۸۴) أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۚ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۚ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۚ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

(۱۸۵) شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۚ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۚ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

'O' you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil) (183),

for a counted number of days; but whoso among you be sick or on a journey than (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man, and whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know (184);

The month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance for the people, and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong); so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein; and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number, and that you may glorify Allah for his

guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him. (185)

General Comment

The sequence of the three verses shows that they were revealed together; ***for a counted number of days*** (in the beginning of the second verse) is an adverbial phrase which qualifies the word, *fasting*, in the first verse; and ***the month of Ramadhan*** in the beginning of the 3rd verse is a predicate, whose subject is a deleted but an understood pronoun denoting the words ***counted number of days*** (which appear in the 2nd verse).

Thus it would mean ***the counted number of days is the month of Ramadhan***. Alternatively, it may be a subject of a deleted but implied predicate, and would mean ***the month of Ramadhan is that in which fasting is prescribed for you***.

As a third possibility, it may be an alternative of the *fasting* mentioned in the first verse. Whatever be the grammatical position, it is the explanation and description of the counted number of days in which fasting has been prescribed.

Therefore, all three verses are well arranged statements with a single aim, i.e., promulgation of the ordinance of fast in the month of Ramadhan.

Obviously, the first sentences have been revealed to prepare minds for the final ones. The first two verses are like a preparatory statement, with which a speaker tries to keep the audience calm and quiet, and this ensures that they do not become restless on hearing the tough commandment which he is to announce shortly.

All the sentences in these two verses gently lead the hearer's mind to the ordinance of the fast of Ramadhan. They mention such things as removing of gloom and anxiety, cheering the soul, and imperceptibly assuaging the mood of unruliness and disobedience.

They point to various concessions and indulgences which have been incorporated in the commandment. And all this is in addition to the goods of this world and the next which may be earned by following the law.

It is for this reason that the sentence ***O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you*** is followed by the phrase ***as it was prescribed for those before you*** — hinting that you should not think it as a heavy burden nor should you feel gloomy, for it is not a new command for which you have been singled out; it was ordained for previous peoples also.

It further encourages them by pointing out: by following this command you may get what you aim at by your faith — and that is piety (*taqwa*, التَّقْوَى) which is the best thing for those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement — and you are believers.

This is the import of the phrase ***so that you may guard yourselves*** (*tattaqun* , تتقون, from the same root as *taqwa*).

Moreover, this worthy action, which inspires the hope of piety in you (as it did in your predecessors), does not ***involve all your time, nor even most of it. It is only for a counted number of days.***

The word “days” (*ayyaman*, أَيَّامٍ) is a common noun, and it shows insignificance. It’s adjective, “counted”, hints that the number is very easy (as we see in the words of Allah in the Qur’an, 12:20,

And they sold him for a small price, some counted pieces of silver).

Allah, now points to further concessions: Look how we have been lenient on the man who has a genuine difficulty in keeping the fast, as well as on the person who is hard pressed to do so.

Such a man should redeem it by a substitute which is neither difficult nor heavy, and that is feeding a poor person.

But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man.

You must appreciate that this act brings much good to you; and that Allah has made it as easy for you as possible. It is in your interest that you should perform it willingly and eagerly without reluctance, sluggishness or annoyance; because if one performs a good deed on his own accord, it is better for him than if he does it under coercion.

This point is made clear in the words:

And whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know.

In this way, the first two verses prepare minds for the third verse, ***So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein***

In the light of this explanation, it is clear that the sentence in the first verse, ***Fasting has been prescribed for you***, is the report of the fact of prescription; it is not the initial promulgation [like the verses,

O Ye who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain ... (2:178)

and

Bequest is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives ... (2:180)]

There is a difference between retaliation in the matter of the slain and bequeathing to parents and near relatives on the one hand, and the fast on the other.

Retaliation for the slain is a matter which is dear to the hearts of the heirs of the slain; and it conforms to the natural rage which is inflamed in them when they see the murderer alive and safe without any worry for the crime he had committed.

Likewise, tender love for one's relatives is in itself enough to encourage one to make one's will in favour of one's parents and relatives, and especially so at the time of death and permanent separation.

These two commandments, i.e., retaliation and bequest are in conformity with natural feelings, and, as such, they do not require preparatory statements or preambles before their promulgation. But the case of the fast is different.

Here the man is denied his choicest desires and most coveted acquirements, i.e., food, drink and sex. It is a heavy burden which should, by nature, be disliked by him.

When such an order is directed to the general public it needs some preparatory and introductory statement so that they may accept this hardship willingly and eagerly.

Therefore, the prescription in the verses of retaliation for the slain and bequest, for parents and relatives is the original promulgation (without need of any preamble); but the words, ***Fasting has been prescribed for you*** is just a report of the commandment and has been used as the preamble of the actual command which comes later:

so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein

Commentary

Qur'an: *O ye who believe.*

This mode of address reminds them of a virtue (faith, belief) which encourages them to accept whatever order is given to them by their Lord, even if it is against their desires and habits.

The verse of retaliation also begins with this very phrase because the Christians, unlike other people, did not believe in retaliation. Therefore, it was necessary to point out that retaliation is allowed to the faithful, even if others do not believe in it.

Qur'an: *Fasting has been written (i.e. prescribed) for you, as it was written (i.e. prescribed) for those before you:*

"Kitabah" (الكتابة) means to write. Metaphorically it is used for prescription, enjoinder and irrevocable decision, as Allah says, *Allah has written down:*

I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles (58:21);

and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints (36: 12);

and We wrote on them in it, a soul for a soul (5:45).

“*Siyam*” and “*sawm*” (الصِّيَامُ and الصَّوْمُ) are infinite verbs meaning to abstain from an action, like abstaining from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, talking, walking, etc.

Also it is said that it means abstaining from desirable and coveted things. Later in religion, it was mostly used for abstaining from some specified things from dawn–break up to sunset with intention (*niyyah*, النَّيَّةُ.)

Those before you means the nations that came before the advent of Islam: the followers of the previous prophets, like the followers of Mūsa, ‘Isa, etc. It is this meaning that is understood from this phrase wherever it occurs in the Qur’an.

The comparison ***as it was prescribed for those before you*** is not general; it does not cover all the peoples, nor all the details of the Islamic fast.

In other words, it does not mean that the fast was prescribed for the followers of all previous prophets, nor that the fast ordained for them was like the Islamic fast in all the details, like period, rules and other particulars.

The comparison is only in the principles of fasting and abstaining from some things without any regard to the particulars.

Those before you indicates followers of the previous religions without specifying who they were.

The words ***as it was written (prescribed)***, show that they were followers of revealed religions, and that the fast was ordained for them, but the present Old and New Testaments do not say that fasting was compulsory and obligatory; rather they extol and praise it.

Still, the Jews and the Christians do fast on various days in the year, in various ways, like abstaining from meat, or milk, or food and drink. There are stories in the Qur’an of the fasts of Zakariyya and Maryam in which they abstained from talking.

Fasting was also observed in traditional (unrevealed) religions, as is reported from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Hindus observe fasts even now.

Apparently, it is human nature itself that leads one to believe that the fast is an act of worship which brings one nearer to the Creator.

Sometimes it is said that ***those before you*** means the Jews and the Christians; or that it refers to only

the previous prophets (and not their followers). The basis of these assertions is some traditions which are not free from weakness.

Qur'an: *So that you may guard yourselves (against evil)* (or, so that you may become pious).

Idol-worshippers fasted to please their deities, or, on committing a sin, to extinguish their deities' anger, or to get their prayers granted.

This turns the fast into a trade or barter; the man performs what is needed by the deity and the deity in its turn grants the prayers of the man; the worshipper pleases the deity so that the deity may do what will please the worshipper.

But Allah is All-holiness. No want, need, emotion or grievance can be attributed to Him even in imagination. In short, He is free from every shortcoming.

So, all the good effects of the worship (whatever the act of worship and whatever the good results) return to the worshipper himself, not to the Lord. The same is the case of sins.

Allah has said:

If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil it is for them (only) (17:7).

It is this principle which the Qur'an teaches by always connecting the effects of good and evil actions with man: man, who is all needs and wants, as Allah says

O man! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient (35: 15);

and refers to the fact specifically in connection with fasting in the words, ***so that you may become pious (may guard your selves against evil).***

There is no doubt that one may achieve piety through fasting. Everyone naturally feels that for union with the sublime world of holiness and for rising to the height of perfection and spirituality man should first of all restrain himself from gratifying material desires.

He should keep away from satisfying the body's lust and inclinations, and purge his soul from the love of worldly affairs. In short, he should guard himself against all such things which may carry him away from his Lord. This is piety (*taqwa*, التَّقْوَى) which is achieved through abstinence from lust and desires.

Even more beneficial and more effective for the common man is the abstinence from common lawful desires like food, drink and sex. This trains him to keep away from unlawful things; and creates in him the will to guard himself against sin and evil, and to come nearer to Allah.

Obviously, when he accepts the words of Allah by abstaining from lawful desires, and heeds to and

obeys His commandment; he will be more needful and obedient to His words in connection with sins and unlawful things.

Qur'an: Counted number of days (*ayyaman ma'dudatin*, معدودات أياما):

“*ayyaman*” has the vowel of (*fathah*, الفتحة, َ) because an adverb of time, in (*fi*, فى) is understood before it. It is connected with the word fast (*siyam*, الصيام).

It has already been explained that bringing the word “days” as a common noun and attaching to it the adjective, “counted”, implies that the order given is not very difficult or bothersome.

This in turn encourages the man to obedience. Also it has been maintained that the words ***the month of Ramadhan*** are the explanation of “days”. So, the meaning of ***counted number of days is the month of Ramadhan***.

Some commentators have said that the words, *counted number of days*, mean three days in every month and the fast of the day of ‘Ash‘ara’ (10th day of Muharram).

Some others have said that it is the 13th, 14th and 15th days of every month plus the fast of ‘Ash‘ara’ According to them, the Messenger of Allah and the Muslims used to fast on these days, then Allah revealed the verses ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an*** ... and this verse abrogated the previous system and made the fast of Ramadhan obligatory.

These commentators rely on many traditions of the Sunnis — traditions which contradict each other.

There are many things which prove the falsity of these assertions:

First: Fasting is a common act of worship involving the whole *ummah*. Had there been a system, at any time, of fasting for three days in a month, it would have been recorded in history, and there would not have been any difference about its ordination and then abrogation. But it is not so.

Moreover, saying that the fast of the day of ‘Ash‘ara’ was obligatory (or even desirable), like the fast of the three days of every month, is the innovation of the Umayyids (May Allah curse them).

They wiped out the progeny of the Messenger of Allah and his family members on the day of ‘Ash‘ara’; they killed their men-folk, imprisoned their women and children and looted their belongings in the battle of Karbala’; and then they regarded it as a blessed auspicious day.

They took that day as an *‘id* (festival), started its fast to obtain its supposed blessings, and then invented for it many virtues and excellences.

They forged many traditions showing that it was an Islamic festival. They went even further and said that it was a common festival which had been observed even by the pagans of Arabia, as well as by the Jews and the Christians since the advent of M‘isa and ‘Isa.

But all these assertions are baseless. This day has no national importance like the Nowrúz of the Persians, nor did there occur any victory or important event on that day to make it an Islamic festival (like the Day of the first revelation or the Birthday of the Prophet) nor has it any religious aspect which could make it a purely religious festival like 'Idu '1-fitr and 'Idu '1-adhha. So how could it be given importance without any reason?

Second: The context makes it impossible to say that the 3rd verse, i.e. *the month of Ramadhan ...*, was revealed alone, to abrogate the first two verses.

As mentioned earlier, it is the predicate of a deleted but understood subject, or the subject of a deleted but implied predicate.

Thus it is a clarification of the words, *counted number of days*, and all three verses are one inter-related speech with a single aim, i.e. the promulgation of the obligatory fast of the month of Ramadhan.

Those commentators claim that the phrase, *month of Ramadhan*, is the subject and words, *in which was sent down the Qur'an*, are its predicate.

If we accept this claim then this third verse would become an independent sentence, capable of being revealed alone. But then it could not abrogate the previous two verses, because there would be no contradiction between this verse and the previous ones; and no verse can abrogate another when there is no contradiction between them.

Even weaker than this is another view, which appears in some writings. It says that the second verse, *for a counted number of days*, abrogated the first verse, *Fasting has been prescribed for you...*

They claim that fasting was prescribed for the Christians, but they went on changing its number after 'Isa (a.s.) until finally it was settled as fifty days.

Allah then ordained it for the Muslims by the first verse, and people fasted accordingly in the beginning of Islam, until the second verse *counted number of days* was revealed and the new system was introduced abrogating the first order.

This view is clearly weaker and more false than the previous ones and all the objections mentioned therein apply here also. Clearly the second verse is complementary to and a continuation of the first verse.

The traditions upon which these people have based their views are obviously against the clear meaning and context of the Qur'an.

Qur'an: *But whoso among you be sick or on a journey then (he shall fast) that number of other days:*

“f...” (ف, then, but, so, and, etc) here is for derivation. It means that the sentence is an off-shoot of ***Fasting has been prescribed on you and for a counted number of days.***

The fast is written down and obligatory and the number is a part of that obligation. The basic obligation (fast) cannot be neglected and the same is the case of the prescribed number.

Even if for any reason like sickness or journey the obligation of fasting during the counted number of days (i.e. month of Ramadhan) is waived, the obligation of fasting an equal number of days after that month will still be enforced, in order to make up for the lost days of Ramadhan. It is this principle which has been mentioned in the 3rd verse ***and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number.***

Here we find another significance of the phrase, ***counted number of days***; it implies that the order given is not very difficult, and also it shows that the number is an integral part of the said obligation.

“Sickness” is the opposite of “health”. *Safar* (journey, السَّفَر) is derived from a root-word which means to uncover. It is as though the traveller is uncovered by going out of his house which is his refuge and shelter.

Allah used the words, ***on a journey***, and did not say ***a traveler***; it shows that for the purpose of this rule one must be on a journey presently. Past travel or a travel which is yet to start (i.e. to commence later) would not make one entitled to this concession.

Most of the Sunni scholars say that this sentence shows only that a sick person or a traveler is allowed, but not compelled to leave the fast. According to them, a sick person or a traveler has the choice of fasting or not fasting.

But, as has been explained earlier, the meaning of ***then that number of other days*** is that he is (not only allowed but is) ‘compelled’ not to fast during the originally prescribed days; he must fast that number of “other days.”

This is narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu ’l-bayt*. Also, it is the ruling of a group of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) like ‘Abdu ’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, Abū Hurayrah and ‘Urwah ibn az-Zubayr.

The Sunni scholars say that this sentence means: ***but whoso among you be sick or on a journey (and did not fast) then (he shall fast) that number of other days***; thus they suppose that there is a deleted but implied verb in this sentence. But this supposition is incorrect because:

First: Such a supposition is against the apparent meaning. A deletion can be accepted only when the context demands it; and the context of this sentence does not need any such thing.

Second: Even if we accept this implied verb, it will not mean that a sick person or a traveler has only an option to break his fast.

In these verses Allah is promulgating a law and in this context the hypothetical, implied words, **and did not fast** will mean that during sickness or journey, breaking one's fast is not a sin, rather it is lawful.

The word 'lawful' is a general one, meaning all or any of its three kinds: obligatory, recommended and allowed. There is no reason to suppose that in this context it would mean only "allowed" (to the exclusion of the other two meanings.)

Rather there is a reason against such a supposition, because the Wise Law-Giver when promulgating a law cannot leave one of its important and obligatory aspects.

Qur'an: and those who are with difficulty able to do so on them is a redemption, by feeding a poor man...

'spending one's active strength in a work' (*itaqah*, الإطاقة) is the meaning explained by some scholars.

It necessarily means that the work would be done with difficulty and by overstraining oneself. *Fidyah* (الفدية) means a substitute.

Here it is a material substitute, i.e., food for a poor man. The word implies a food which satiates a hungry poor man; and it should be the normal food of the man.

The rule of the substitute also is obligatory, like the rule of repaying a fast afterward for the sick or the traveller. It is shown by the words, 'on those' (*'ala'l-ladhina*, على الذين), which is obviously for obligation and not merely for option or choice.

Some people have said that this sentence gave the people an option and then it was abrogated. According to them, Allah had given all those who were able to fast an option to keep the fast or to redeem it by feeding a poor man every day, because in the beginning people were not accustomed to fast.

Then it was abrogated by the sentence, **So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein**. Some of those writers said that this verse abrogated the option so far as able persons were concerned.

But the rule regarding those who were unable to fast (like extremely old persons, pregnant women and women who are suckling a baby) remained unabrogated and they could give the substitute.

By God, such an explanation is nothing but playing with the Qur'an and cutting and chopping up the verses into shreds and fragments.

If you study these 3 verses, you will see that it is all a well-connected speech, delivered with one aim, all in one context only; its sentences are connected with each other, having a sweetness and flow of their own.

But if you cut it into pieces and accept these people's interpretation then everything will fall out of context and some phrases will contradict others; the latter sentences will clash with the former ones.

According to their explanation, first it says 'Fasting is prescribed for you', then it says that 'those who are able to fast have an option to fast or to redeem it by a substitute'; then it goes on to say that 'fasting is obligatory for all of you when you witness the month'; then it abrogates the rule of redemption for able persons and keeps it unchanged for unable ones (while the fact remains that even before the supposed abrogation that verse was not concerned at all with those who were unable).

They want us to believe that the single word meaning 'those who are with difficulty able to do so' (*yutiqunahu*, يطيقونه) referred, before the abrogation, to those who were able to fast; and now after abrogation the same word means 'those who are unable to fast'!

In short, according to these commentators, **those who are with difficulty able to do so** in the middle of the verse would abrogate **fasting is prescribed for you** which is in the beginning of the verse, because both would be contradictory to each other; but the question would arise why that abrogation was made conditional on ability without any apparent reason.

Then again the sentence, **So whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein**, at the end of the verse, would abrogate **those who are with difficulty able** which is in the middle.

Still the question would arise as to how it abrogated that rule for only those who were able to fast and not for those who were unable to do so, when the verse is unconditional and comprehensive, and covers able and unable persons alike.

Interestingly enough, the supposedly abrogated verse in itself did not cover those who were unable. This is its most obvious absurdity.

Add to it their assertion that the words, **the month of Ramadhan ...**, abrogated the words, **counted number of days**, which in their turn abrogated the words, **Fast has been prescribed for you**; and then ponder with this background upon the meaning of the verses and you will be astonished!

Nothing of the verses would remain intact; all would have been abrogated!!

Qur'an: and whosoever on his own accord performs good it is better for him.

'To do work willingly and gladly' (*tatawwu'*, التَّطَوُّع) is of the form *tafa'ul* (التَّفَعُّل) from *tawu'* (الطَّوْع) which is the opposite of 'to dislike' (*kurh*, الكره).

The meaning of acceptance is implied in the form *tafa'ul* (التَّفَعُّل); therefore, the meaning of *tatawwu'* (التَّطَوُّع) is 'the present doing of work willingly and gladly without reluctance or annoyance, whether that work is obligatory or not'.

The use of this word especially for non-obligatory good work was established among the Muslims long after the revelation of the Qur'an, and this later usage is based on the view that it is only non-obligatory good work which is done willingly without compulsion, while there is a shade of compulsion in obligatory work because there is no choice, it has to be done.

Anyhow, the word *tatawwu'* (التَطَوُّع) in its root or form, was not used only for non-obligatory good work.

The preposition for derivation is here represented by "f ..." (ف; and, so, etc.), and the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentences.

Thus its meaning is: Fasting is prescribed for you, keeping in view your good and betterment, with the additional advantage that it brings you in line with previous peoples, and it has been made easy for you; therefore you should perform it willingly, to do it thus rather than doing it reluctantly.

It appears from the above that the words of Allah: *whoso performs good willingly* have metaphorically put the 'cause' in the place of 'effect'. It says that to perform good willingly is better for him, instead of saying that to fast willingly is better.

It is like the verse,

Indeed We know, it certainly grieves thee that which they say, but verily it is not thee that they belie, but it is the signs of Allah which the wrong-doers deny (6:33),

which means "so endure it and do not be grieved because they do not deny ,thee..."

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, ***whoso willingly performs good it is better for him***, is connected with the preceding sentence, i.e. ***those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man.***

According to this interpretation it means that whoso performs non-obligatory good work by giving redemption twice — feeds one poor man twice or two poor men once, it is better for him.

But there are three defects in this interpretation:

First: As mentioned earlier, there is no evidence to show that the word meaning 'to do a work willingly' (*tatawwu'*, التَطَوُّع) is reserved for non-obligatory good work.

Second: In this interpretation "f ..." (ف) would be without any real significance. It has been mentioned above that the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentence. But what is the connection between the rule of redemption and giving non-obligatory food on one's own accord?

Third: This interpretation confuses ***adding something on one's own accord with performing good willingly.*** But obviously these are two separate things.

Qur'an: *and that you fast is better for you if you know:*

This sentence is complementary to the preceding one; and the meaning is: Perform willingly the fast which is prescribed for you because willingly doing a good deed is in itself another good work, and the fast is good for you, therefore, to fast willingly is good twice.

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, ***and that you fast is better for you***, is addressed to those who are excused from fasting and not to the other believers who are obliged to fast and for whom the fast is compulsory.

They say that its apparent meaning is that fasting is better for you, but there would be no objection if you do not fast. Obviously this meaning can fit the non-obligatory fast only, and not the obligatory one.

The implication is that those who have the option not to fast (like a sick person or a traveller) are exhorted to fast and it is recommended to them to keep the fast rather than to break it.

There are five objections to this interpretation:

First: There is no evidence to support this view.

Second: The two sentences differ in syntax. The pronoun in ***whoso among you be sick ...*** is in the 3rd person, and those in ***and that you fast ...*** are in the 2nd person.

Third: The first sentence does not give any option to the sick man or the traveller. On the contrary, the words, ***then (he shall fast) that number of other days***, obviously specify fasting on other days, as explained earlier.

Fourth: Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that the first sentence gives an option to the sick person and the traveller, that option is not between fasting and not fasting; it is between fasting in Ramadhan and fasting on other days.

And as both options are of a fast in different periods, merely the words, ***that you fast is better for you***, cannot prove (in the absence of a clear context) any preference for fasting in Ramadhan over fasting on other days.

Fifth: Allah in this sentence is not promulgating any law, so that it may be argued that the description of the preference of fasting shows that in this particular case it is not obligatory.

Rather, according to the context of this verse, its aim is to emphasize that the law given by Allah cannot be devoid of benefit, good and advantage for you.

Other examples of this style may be seen in many verses, like,

therefore turn to your Creator and kill your selves; that is better for you (2:54);

then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know (62:9);

you shall believe in Allah and His Apostles, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives; that is better for you if you know. (61:11).

And there are many such verses which show that this style of speech in the Qur'an does not give an option to the believer, it only shows that a given order is for their own advantage and benefit.

Qur'an: the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance ...:

The month of Ramadhan is the ninth month of the lunar Arabic calendar, between the months of Sha'ban and Shawwal. No other month has been mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

The word meaning 'to come down' is *nuzul* (النَّزُول). Its transitive forms meaning 'to bring down' are *inzal* (الانزال) and *tanzil* (التَّنْزِيل); the difference between them is that *inzal* (الانزال) implies bringing down all at once, while *tanzil* (التَّنْزِيل) implies bringing down gradually.

The Qur'an (القرآن) is the name of the book sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), because it is recited and read. [It is derived from the root form *qara'a* (قرأ) meaning to read or recite.] Allah has said:

Surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand (43:3).

This name is used for the whole book as well as for its parts.

The verse proves that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan. But Allah has also said,

And the Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down sending it (in portions) (17:106).

And this verse clearly shows that it was revealed gradually during the entire period of the Call, which was about twenty-three years. Also accepted history proves it. This has apparently given room to the objection that there was a complete conflict between these two verses.

Some people have replied that the Qur'an was sent down all at once to the lowest heaven in the month of Ramadhan, and then was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in portions, gradually, over about twenty-three years — the total period of the Call.

This reply is based on some traditions, some of which will be quoted during the discussion of traditions.

Others have objected to this reply. They say that the words ***a guidance for mankind, and clear evidence of guidance and distinction*** which come immediately after these words do not support this interpretation; it is difficult to understand how the Qur'an guided the people and was a source of

discrimination between truth and falsehood during the time when it was in the heaven for years and years.

This objection has been answered in this way: The Qur'an is a guidance and a discrimination; it means that it had the potential and ability to guide those who needed its guidance and to discriminate between the truth and falsehood if there was any confusion.

It could remain with that hidden potential for a while until the time came for that potential to become a fact. There are countless examples in civil laws and state constitutions where many articles remain on paper until the occasion arises for their enforcement and they are then acted upon.

But we must admit that there is a great difference between constitutions and civil laws on one hand, and addresses and lectures on the other.

Lectures or talks cannot be delivered a single moment before their time and occasion, and there are in the Qur'an numerous verses of this type. For example:

Allah surely heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you ... (58:1);

And when they see merchandise or sport, they break up for it and leave you standing ... (62:11);

Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least (33:23).

Moreover, the Qur'an contains verses which have been abrogated and other that abrogated them, and there is no sense in combining both of them in revelation sent all together.

Another interpretation is that the declaration that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan means that its first verses were revealed at that time.

It is difficult to accept this interpretation either. It is well known that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent with the Qur'an, and the beginning of his Call was on the 27th Rajab, and there is between this date and Ramadhan a gap of more than thirty days.

How could the prophethood remain without the revelation of the Qur'an for such a long period? Look at the 96th chapter which was the first chapter revealed (***Read in the name of your Lord ...***) its context shows that it was revealed at the beginning of the Call.

Likewise, the contents of the 74th chapter show that this also was revealed at the beginning.

Anyhow, the words, ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an***, obviously do not mean that only the first verses were revealed at that time; and there is no such indication in the context.

Therefore, such explanation would be without any proof or evidence. Also there are some more verses which have similar meaning.

For example,

By the Book that makes manifest (the truth), Surely We sent it down on a blessed night; Surely We are ever-warning (44:2-3);

and

Surely We sent it down on the Night of Destiny (97:1).

Neither the apparent meanings of these verses nor their contexts support the view that ***sending down of the Qur'an*** means the beginning of its revelation or the revealing of its first verses.

Deep consideration of the verses of the Book shows something quite different from all the above interpretations.

The verses which say that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan, have used the verbal form of *inzal* (الانزال) which indicates sending down all at once. (Qur'an 2:185; 44:23; 97:1). This "all at once" can mean either of these two things:

1) To consider the complete book as one collection and look at it as a collective noun, as Allah says in 10:24

Like the water which we sent down from the sky.

Now, the rain comes down gradually, but it is looked upon as one whole collection and that is why the verbal form *inzal* (الانزال), and not *tanzil* (التنزيل), has been used.

The same is the meaning of the verse

(this is) a book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses ... (38:29)

in which the whole book has been taken as one collection and the verbal form *inzal* (الانزال) has been used.

2) To accept that the reality of the Book is something different from the words written on paper, etc.

Its common meaning gives the picture of a thing which can be divided and sectionalized, and which can be a subject of expansion and graduality, but the reality of the Book is a single, non-gradual thing which was sent down all at once, and not in pieces.

3) This second meaning is apparent in many verses of the Qur'an. See for example the verses,

(This is) a book whose verses were confirmed, then they were divided (made clear) from One Wise All-aware. (11:1)

“Strengthened” or “confirmed” (*uhkimat*, احكمت) is the opposite of “divided”, “made clear” (*fussilat*, فصّلت). The literal meaning of *tafsil* (التّفصیل) is to divide into parts and sections; that is why it implies explanation and clarification.

Therefore, confirmed (*uhkimat*, احكمت) would mean that in that state it was indivisible and indistinguishable in its parts, because it was a single unit without any part of section.

The sequence of the words in this verse shows that this division which we find in the Qur’an came to it later; before that, it was something confirmed, undivided and one.

More clear are the verses,

And certainly, We have brought them a Book which We have ‘sectionalized’ (i.e. explained) with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe. Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the Apostles of our Lord had brought the truth ... (7:52-53).

Also the verses,

And this Qur’an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a ‘sectionalization’ (explained) of the Book, there is no doubt in it, for the Lord of the worlds ... Nay, they rejected that of which they have not comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them ... (10:37-38).

These verses, and especially the last one, clearly show that the division into parts is a thing which came later unto the Book. Therefore, the reality of the Book is one thing and the division which it was subjected to is another.

The unbelievers rejected the division (explanation) of the Book because they neglected (forgot) something to which that explanation led and which has been referred to here as the “final interpretation”, and which will appear before them on the Day of Judgement and, at that time, they will inevitably know it, but then their regret will not benefit them, ***and it is too late to repent.***

These verses also imply that the real Book is the final interpretation of the Book.

Even far more clear are the verses,

By the Book which makes manifest (the truth), surely We made it an Arabic Qur’an that you may understand, and surely it is in the Source of the Book with Us truly elevated, full of Wisdom. (43:2-4)

It is apparent that there is a Book which makes manifest the truth, which was later made into an Arabic Qur'an (Recited thing); and it was clothed in recited words and Arabic language so that people might understand; but in reality it is in the Source of the Book with Allah, elevated, so that minds do not reach it, full of wisdom without any division.

This verse contains the definition of the Manifest Book and that it is the foundation of the Qur'an revealed later in plain Arabic.

In the same way Allah says in 56:75—80

But nay! I swear by the falling of stars – and most surely it is a great oath if you only know – Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an in a Hidden Book, none touches it save the purified ones; A sending down (revelation) from the Lord of the worlds.

These verses clearly show that the Qur'an has its own place, in the Hidden Book, where none touches it save the purified servants of Allah, and it was only later that it was sent down.

But before being sent down it was in a Book which is hidden from others. It is that Hidden Book which was referred to as the Source of the Book in 43:2–4. The verse 85:21–22 calls that Source the Guarded Tablet:

Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet.

This tablet is called Guarded because it is preserved and protected from changes; but we know that in the Qur'an which was sent down gradually there are verses abrogating other verses; gradual completion itself is a sort of change.

So this Qur'an cannot be called the Guarded Tablet. In short, the Manifest Book is the foundation of this Qur'an and this Qur'an is like a clothing to that Reality.

Now we know that the relation of this Qur'an, when it was gradually revealed, to the Manifest Book — which we call the Reality of the Book — is that of a dress to its wearer, and of a metaphor to its real meaning, and of a proverb to its actual aim.

It is because of this relationship that the word Qur'an is sometimes used for the Real Book itself, as in the divine words, ***Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet***, and in other similar verses.

Therefore, we may correctly interpret the 'sending down of the Qur'an', in the three verses, where it is said that it was revealed in the month of Ramadhan (2:185), on a blessed night (44:3), on the Night of Destiny (97:1), as the revelation of the Source of the Book, i.e., the Manifest Book to the heart of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) all at once.

And the sectionalized Qur'an was revealed to his heart gradually during the entire period of his prophetic

Call.

This can be better appreciated when we study some other verses. Allah says,

and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you... (20:114)

Also He says:

Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it; surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation; again on Us is the explaining of it. (75:16-19).

These verses prove without any shadow of doubt that the Messenger of Allah had prior knowledge of what was being revealed to him. That is why he was asked not to make haste in reciting before its revelation was completed. (This matter will be further explained, God willing, in its proper place)

In short, after pondering on the verses of the Qur'an one cannot but accept that:

This Qur'an which was gradually revealed to the Prophet is based on a sublime Reality which the minds of common people cannot comprehend and the hands of defiled imaginations (defiled with lust, greed and materialism) cannot touch.

That sublime Reality was revealed to the Prophet all at once in the month of Ramadhan. And in this way Allah taught him the real goal and meaning of the Book. (This subject will be explained under the verse 3:7.)

This is what a deep consideration of the verses of the Qur'an leads one to believe. Of course, the traditionalists, and most of the theologians as well as the materialists (who do not accept the reality of metaphysics, the things beyond the matter) have no way but to interpret these and the like verses (e.g. the verses which say that the Qur'an is a guidance, mercy, light, spirit, setting-place of the stars, manifest book, in a guarded tablet, sent down from Allah, in purified pages etc.) as metaphorical and figurative expressions. Thus they have turned the Qur'an into poetic prose!!

A writer has discussed the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan. What follows is the gist of his writing; our comment will follow thereafter:

“There is no doubt that the beginning of the Call of the Prophet coincided with the revelation of the first revealed verses of the Qur'an, and with his being asked by Allah to announce the truth and warn the people.

Also, there is no doubt that this happened in the night, as Allah says,

Surely We sent it down on a blessed night (44:3).

Again, there is no doubt that it was in a night of the month of Ramadhan as Allah says,

the month of Ramadhan, in which was sent down the Qur'an. (2: 185)

“The whole Qur'an was not revealed on that night; but as the chapter of ***The Opening*** was revealed in it, and this chapter covers all the features and knowledge of the Qur'an, it was as though the whole Qur'an was revealed therein.

(Moreover, the name “Qur'an” is used for parts of the Book as well as for the complete book. Further, it is used in Qur'anic terminology for all divine books like the Torah, the Injil, the Zabur etc.)

“The first revelation was

Read in the name of Thy Lord ... (96:1),

which was sent down on the 25th night of Ramadhan. It was revealed when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was proceeding to the house of Khadijah in the middle of the valley, looking at Jibril, who revealed to him the divine words, ***Read in the name of Thy Lord Who created ...*** When the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) received the revelation, it came into his mind to ask Jibril how to remember the name of his Lord.

So, Jibril appeared before him and taught him the chapter of the Opening, ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds ...*** Then he taught him the method of prayer and disappeared.

Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) regained consciousness, and did not find any trace of what he had witnessed except a fatigue which had overcome him because Jibril had pressed him hard at the time of revelation.

Now, the Prophet continued on his way but he did not realize that he was sent by Allah as His Messenger to mankind, commissioned to guide them unto the right path.

When he entered the house, he slept the whole night because of weariness. In the morning, the angel returned and brought the revelation of God,

O thou shrouded (in thy mantle!) Arise, and warn ... (74:1-2)

Then he goes on to say:

“This is the meaning of revealing the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan, and the coincidence of his Call with the Night of Destiny.

As for the assertion of some Shi'ite books that the start of the Call was on the 27th day of Rajab, these traditions (which are only found in some Shi'ite books which were not written before the beginning of the 4th century of Hijrah) are against the Qur'an, as you know.”

Then he says:

“And there are other traditions which support these (Shi'ite) traditions and say that the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan is that it was sent down, before the beginning of the Call of the Prophet, from the Guarded Tablet to the Inhabited House, and there Jibril dictated it to the angels so that it might be sent down to the Prophet after the beginning of his Call.

But these mythological ideas which have been interpolated into the traditions are rejected, first, because they are against the Qur'an, and second, because *the guarded tablet* mentioned in the Qur'an means the physical world, and *the inhabited house* means the earth because mankind lives therein.”

This was the gist of his writing and, by my life; I do not know which sentence in this balderdash can be amended to conform with fact and reality. The damage is too extensive to be repaired.

First: It is a strange fabrication which he has uttered about the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an for the first time.

Where did he find that *Read in the name of Thy Lord ...* was revealed to the Prophet when he was on his way; and that the chapter of *the Opening* was revealed to him then and there; and at the same time he was taught the prayer, and that thereafter he entered his house and slept weary and tired, and then in the morning the chapter of *al-Muddaththir* (the Shrouded) was revealed asking him to announce his prophethood and warn the people?

All of this is just his imagination which has no basis at all; neither any clear verse nor any tradition of any standing supports it. It is just a mythological story which conforms with neither the Qur'an nor the traditions, as you will see.

Second: He claims that it is accepted that the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an as well as the command to announce his prophethood, all happened at one and the same time.

Then he explains it by saying that the prophethood started with the revelation of the Qur'an; and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was a prophet without being an apostle (Messenger of Allah) for one night, then in the morning he was given Messengership when the 74th chapter (The Shrouded) was revealed.

But the writer cannot show any evidence to support himself either from the Qur'an or from the traditions; and what he claims to be “accepted” is not accepted at all.

As for the traditions, what he has criticised the Shi'ite collections for (that they were written long after the incident) equally discredits all other collections of traditions and no trust can be had in any of them, because not a single book of the traditions, whether of the Sunnis or the Shi'ahs, was written before the expiry of the second century of Hijrah or even later; this is about the traditions.

The position of history — which, by the way, does not give the above details — is worse than the

traditions. And the criticism of interpolation which he has levelled against the traditions must be directed against history also.

So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not support any of his assertions. On the other hand, it plainly contradicted what he has said and refutes what he has fabricated.

The 96th chapter (***Read in the name of Thy Lord ...***) is the first one revealed, as has been described by the traditions and is proved by the meaning of the first five verses; and nobody has said that this chapter was revealed piecemeal, (at least there is a likelihood that the whole chapter was revealed all together).

Now, this chapter clearly shows that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray in the presence of the Meccans, some of whom forbade him to do so and talked about him in their gatherings.

(We do not know the method of the prayer which the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) performed in the beginning of his Call to be nearer to Allah, except that this chapter mentions prostration.)

Look at these verses of this chapter:

Did you see him who forbids a Servant (of Allah) when he prays? Have you considered if he (the Servant) were on the Guidance or enjoined guarding (against evil)? Have you considered if he (the unbeliever) gives the lie (to the truth) and turns (his) back? Did he not know that Allah does see? Nay! If he desist not, We will certainly smite his forehead; a lying sinful forehead. Then let him summon his council; We too will summon the tormentors of Hell. Nay! Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh (to Allah) (95:9—19).

These verses show that there was someone who used to forbid a worshipper to pray, and used to mention this matter in his council and did not desist from his deed, and obviously the one who used to pray was the Prophet himself (s.a.w.a.), especially as Allah directly addresses him in the last verse, ***Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh*** (to Allah).

This chapter, therefore, proves that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray even before the revelation of the first chapter of the Qur'an, and was a Guidance, and enjoined piety and guarding against evil.

In other words, his work at that time consisted of prophethood and was not just a warning. In short, even before the Qur'an was revealed, and the chapter of ***the Opening*** sent down to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and even before he was told to start his Call, he was a prophet and used to pray.

So far as the chapter of ***the Opening*** is concerned, it was revealed some time after the beginning of the Call.

Had there been any truth in the assertion of the above writer that it was revealed just after the 94th chapter because "it came into the Prophet's mind to ask Jibril how to remember Allah", it would have

begun with the word say (*qul*, قل):

Say, in the name of Allah ... or Say, all praise belongs to Allah ... ; and would have ended at the words, **Master of the Day of Judgement**, because the last three verses have no relation with that supposed question, and it is not the style of the Qur'an to indulge in unnecessary talk.

Of course, a verse in the 15th chapter (al-Hijr) says “**And certainly We have given you seven oft-repeated (verses) and the great Qur'an**” (15-87) .

This chapter is of Meccan period as its subject matter shows. **Seven oft-repeated verses** means the chapter of **the Opening**, and it has been mentioned here side by side with the Qur'an, which shows its greatness and excellence.

Yet it was not counted as the *Qur'an*, but only as **seven of its oft-repeated verses**, and only one of its parts.

For further proof see 39:23 where the Qur'an has been given the adjective, “oft-repeated”:

Allah has revealed the best discourse, a Book conforming in its various parts, oft-repeated ...

Thus, the Qur'an is “oft-repeated” and the chapter of **the Opening** is only **seven of its verses**.

The 15th chapter mentions the 1st chapter (the Opening). It proves that the 1st chapter was revealed before the 15th. And the 15th chapter contains the verses;

Therefore, declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists. Surely, We will suffice you against the scoffers. (15:94—95)

These verses show that the Messenger of Allah had refrained from openly warning for a time and then was told to start it again by the words, **declare openly**.

Now let us look at the 74th chapter (the Shrouded) and its 2nd verse, **Arise, and warn**. If this chapter was revealed all together, then this verse has the same implication as the verse

declare openly what you are bidden (15:94)

because this chapter contains the following verses:

Leave Me and him whom I created alone and given him vast riches ... Then he turned back and was big with pride and, then he said, this is naught but an enchantment narrated (74:11-25).

This subject matter is similar to 15:94 which says

and turn aside from the polytheists.

And if it was revealed piecemeal, then the context says that at least the verses in its beginning were revealed in the early days of the Call, after the Prophet had refrained from an open warning for some time.

Thirdly: He asserts that those traditions are forged and mythological which say that the Qur'an was sent down on the Night of Destiny from the Preserved Tablet to the Inhabited House all together before the beginning of the prophethood and then its verses were revealed in segments to the Messenger of Allah.

He says that they are against the Book of Allah and their meaning is not correct. He claims that the Preserved Tablet means the Natural World and the Inhabited House means the Earth. Well, all the above claims are incorrect and a complete lie:

First, because no clear verse of the Qur'an goes against these traditions as has been explained earlier.

Second, because nowhere in these traditions has it been said that the Qur'an was sent down to the Inhabited House *before the beginning of the prophethood*. This clause has been added by the said writer without any basis.

Third, his assertion that the Preserved Tablet means the natural world (i.e. the universe) is a very ugly interpretation; nay, rather it is a laughing-stock. Can he explain the basis of naming this universe — in the word of Allah — as 'the Preserved Tablet'?

Is this because this universe is free from change and alteration? But it is a world of movement, always in a state of fluidity, always changing its quality. Or is it because this universe is safe from physical deterioration? But the facts belie such a claim.

Or is it because undeserving persons cannot have any knowledge of it (as Allah says in 56:77-79,

Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an, in a book that is protected; none shall touch it save the purified ones?

But the knowledge of the universe is not restricted to any one group.

In short, that writer did not produce any interpretation concerning the revelation of Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan, which could be in accord with the words of the verse. His interpretation boils down to this:

The words, ***in it was sent down the Qur'an***, mean "it is as though in it was sent down the Qur'an." And the words, ***Surely We revealed it in the Night of Destiny***, mean "It is as though We revealed it in the Night of Destiny." Any such interpretation cannot be tolerated by language, usage and context.

Further, that writer says that the whole Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah in the Night of Destiny because he was given in that night the chapter of the *Opening* which contains all the important knowledge of the Qur'an.

Well why cannot others say that the revelation of the Qur'an all at one time means that all its knowledge was sent down to the heart of the Messenger of Allah in that night? There is nothing to contradict this interpretation.

There are many other fabrications and lies in that writing but this is not the place to go into a detailed refutation of it.

Qur'an: a guidance for the people and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong):

“People” generally refers to the lowest category of mankind whose intelligence is not high. This word is generally used in the Qur'an with this very implication.

For example,

but most people do not know (30:30);

And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them but the learned (29:43).

This word generally refers to the people who just follow what others say; they cannot understand abstract ideas even with the help of evidence and proof; they cannot discriminate between right and wrong through any argument; they need someone to explain ideals and a guide to lead them to the right path.

And the Qur'an is a guidance for these people; and what an ideal guidance it is!! Then comes the special group which is perfect both in knowledge and deeds, ready to receive the light of divine guidance, and may be relied upon to discriminate between right and wrong.

For such people, the Qur'an is the clear evidence and proof of guidance and discrimination. It leads them to the guidance and chooses right for them and shows them how to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Allah says:

Whereby Allah guides him, who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace and takes them out from darkness towards the light by His will and guides them unto the path that is straight. (5:16)

From the above discourse one may understand why Allah has used here two words “guidance” and “clear evidence of guidance”. The relation between the two is that of general and particular. The Qur'an is guidance for one group and clear evidence of guidance for another.

Qur'an: so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.

Shahadah (witnessing, الشَّهَادَة) means ‘presence’ by which one acquires knowledge. Witnessing the month means arrival of the month and the knowledge of its arrival.

Some people say that witnessing of the month means sighting of the new moon, and not on journey. But there is no evidence to support this interpretation. Of course, sometimes the context implies such a meaning but there is no such context in this verse.

Qur'an: *and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days,*

this sentence has been repeated here. But this repetition is not for emphasis.

It was explained earlier that the first two verses did not promulgate any law; rather they paved the way for such promulgation and prepared the minds to accept and follow the law which was to be shortly announced.

It is in this third verse in which that law has been promulgated. As the aim of the first sentences is different from this one, there is, in fact, no repetition.

Qur'an: *Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number:*

it is the explanation of the above mentioned exception.

A sick person or a traveller has to break his fast because ***Allah desires ease for you***, and he shall fast the same number in other days ***so that you may complete the prescribed number***.

So that “L...” (J; so that) in ‘so that you may complete the number’ (*litukmilu 'l-‘iddah* , لتكملوا العدة) gives the meaning of cause, and it is governed by the verb “desires”.

Therefore, its meaning will be: We ordered you to break the fast (under certain conditions) and repay it in other days to lighten your burden and to complete the prescribed number.

Qur'an: *and that you glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him:*

Apparently, these two sentences, the first of which begins with ‘so that’ (L ..., J) for a ‘cause’, give the reason of the fast, and not of the exception and exemption.

The words ***the month of Ramadhan*** are followed by the description of the revelation of the Qur'an in this month.

And it indicates that there is a connection between the promulgation of the fast of the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur'an in it as a guidance for the people and a clear evidence of guidance and discrimination between right and wrong.

Therefore, the “so that” (L... ,J) points out that keeping the fast is meant to glorify Allah because He revealed the Qur'an for them and announced His Lordship and the people's servitude.

Also it is a thanks to Him since He guided them unto the truth and gave them a Book which discriminates for them between right and wrong.

There is a difference between thanking Allah by fasting and glorifying Him through it. A fast can be said to be a thanks to Allah only when it contains the real spirit of the fast.

What is the real spirit of the fast? To be sincere towards Allah by purifying oneself from material involvement and abstaining from the greatest desires of the heart.

But glorifying Him does not depend on that real spirit. The form of the fast and mere abstaining from those things which break the fast (whether it is done with sincere intention or not) shows the glory of Allah and His greatness, as the man is following His command with such self-denial.

Keeping in view this difference, Allah has differentiated between glorifying and thanking:

Thanking has been prescribed with “لعل” (*la'alla*) which literally means ‘perhaps’ and is used to indicate hope, while glorifying has begun with “so that” (ل, ج) which indicates cause. And thus we find

and that you glorify Allah...and so that you may be thankful to Him.

It is the same style which is used at the end of the first of these verses so that you may guard yourselves...

Traditions

al-Hadith al-Qudsi: Allah said, “The fast is for Me and I shall give its reward.” (or, “I shall be its reward”)

Explanation: This *hadith* has been narrated by both groups (i.e. Sunni and Shi'ah) with slight variations. Why has the fast been declared to be for Allah?

Because it is the only act of worship which consists of a negative aspect only, for example, not eating, not drinking, etc., while all other acts of worship, like prayer and pilgrimage etc., consist of positive actions or are made up of positive and negative aspects.

The positive actions cannot be absolutely pure in showing the worshipper's spirit of servitude or the Lordship of Almighty Allah. It cannot be free of materialistic imperfections and limitations, and sometimes it may be done to please someone other than Allah (as in the case of hypocrisy and showiness.)

But the fast is an act of worship in which one has just to abstain from lust and desire and restrain oneself from worldly matters. This negative aspect is a thing which nobody can know except Allah.

It is a deal entirely between the servant and his Lord, and therefore this worship is purely for Allah;

others can have no share in it.

“I shall give its reward” can also be translated “I shall be its reward”. If it is the former, then it means that Allah Himself will give its reward directly and will not make anyone a link between Himself and His servant.

The servant worshipped Him in a way that nobody knew but Allah, so he will be given its reward in a way that nobody will know it but Allah.

It is like the *hadith* about alms: “Verily alms, Allah takes it Himself without making anyone a link in it. Allah said,

Do they not know that Allah ... takes the alms. (9: 105)

If the second translation is correct, then it indicates that the reward of the one who fasts is nearer to Allah.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The Messenger of Allah, in the early days of his prophethood, used to fast continuously so that people would think that he would not leave a single day’s fast, and then to leave the fast continuously so that they would say he would not fast again.

Then he changed this regime and began fasting on alternate days, and this was the fast of Dawūd. Then he changed it and started fasting three bright days (i.e., 13th, 14th and 15th of the lunar month when the moonlight is the brightest.)

Then again he divided the three days — one day each in every ten days, the first and last Thursdays and the Wednesday in the middle. And he continued with this regime till he left this world.” [*al-Kafi*]

And there is a *hadith* from ‘Anbasah al-‘Abid that when the Messenger of Allah died, it was his custom to fast in Sha‘ban and Ramadhan and three days in every month.

The author says: There are numerous traditions about it from *Ahlu ‘l-bayt*; and this is the *sunnah* fast which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to keep in addition to the fast of Ramadhan.

There is a *hadith* in *Tafsir* of al-‘Ayyashi under the words of Allah, ***O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you***, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that “It is for the believers only.”

Jamil asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah ***O ye who believe! Fighting has been prescribed for you, and O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed on you.***

The Imam replied: “All such verses cover (even) those who have gone astray as well as the hypocrites, and (in short) everyone who accepted the declared Call (i.e. Islam).”

Hafs said: “I heard Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) say: ‘Verily the month of Ramadan, Allah did not prescribe its fast

for any of the people before us.’ I asked: ‘Then (what is the meaning of) the word of Allah:

O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you?’

(The Imam) said: ‘Verily Allah prescribed the month of Ramadhan for the prophets, not for their peoples. Thus Allah honoured this *ummah* and prescribed its fast for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) as well as for this *ummah*.’” [Man la yahdhuruhu ‘l faqih]

The author says: This *hadith* is weak because there is Isma‘il ibn Muhammad in its chain of narrators. The same thing is narrated from al-‘Alim i.e. al-Kazim (a.s.), and probably both traditions are one and the same. In any case, this is a solitary tradition (*khbaru ‘l-wahid*, الخبر الواحد — a tradition which is not narrated by a great enough number of narrators as to create a certainty of its truth).

The obvious meaning of the verses does not support the view that “as it was prescribed for those before you” refers to the prophets only.

Had it been the case (and we know that this sentence has been revealed to encourage the believers to fast, to prepare them for it and to exhort them), then it would have served the purpose better if the word, ‘prophets’, had been clearly mentioned, as it would have been more effective. And Allah knows better.

There is a tradition from a man who asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) whether the Qur’an and furqan are two things or one. (The Imam) said: “Qur’an is the complete Book and Furqan is the obligatory law.” [al-Kafi]

A *hadith* from the same Imam (a.s.) says: “Furqan is every clear verse of the Book.” [Jawami ‘u ‘l-jami ‘]

The same Imam (a.s.) said: “Furqan is every clear law in the Qur’an and the Book is the complete Qur’an which vouches for the previous prophets.” [at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi and al-Qummi]

The author says: This interpretation is supported by the literal meaning of the word.

It has been said in some traditions that Ramadhan is one of the names of Allah; therefore, one should not say ‘Ramadhan came’ or ‘Ramadhan went away’; but should say ‘the month of Ramadhan ...’ But it is a solitary tradition and is unusual.

This saying has been reported also from Qatadah from among the commentators of the Qur’an. But the traditions which count the names of Allah do not mention Ramadhan as one of His names.

And the use of the word Ramadhan without the word “month” as well as its dual form “Ramadhanan”(two Ramadhans) is very common in the traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahlu ‘l-bayt* (a.s.)

This usage is very common; and it cannot be said that a particular narrator might have omitted the word

'month' by mistake.

as-Sabah ibn Nubatah said: "I told Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) that Ibn Abi Ya'fūr told me to ask you some questions. The Imam said: 'And what are those?' I said:

'He asks you, if the month of Ramadhan enters and one is in his house, is he allowed to go on a journey?' The Imam said: 'Verily Allah says ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.***

Therefore, anyone who is in his house when the month of Ramadhan enters is not allowed to travel except for *hajj* or *'umrah* or in search of such goods which are in danger of being lost.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: It is a fine inference of a non-obligatory law based on the generality of the words.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said: "And as regards the fast of a journey and sickness, the Sunnis (*'ammah, العامة*) have conflicting views: a group says, he shall fast; others say, he shall not fast ; still others opine, he will fast if he so wishes, and shall leave it if so desires.

But we say he shall leave the fast in both conditions. And if he fasted while on journey or during illness then on him is its repayment, i.e. he must fast the same number on other days, because Allah says,

But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) the sane number of other days." [al-Kafi]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi also has narrated this tradition.

And there is in the same *Tafsir* (under the word of Allah, ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month ...***) a tradition of al-Baqir (a.s.) in which the Imam said:

How clear is this verse for him who understands — He who is present in Ramadhan shall fast, and he who is on a journey during it shall break the fast.

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that it is incumbent on the sick and the traveller to break the fast; and the same is their *madhhab*. Also, you have seen that the verse of the Qur'an clearly proves the same.

Abū Basir said: "I asked him (the Imam — a.s.) about the words of Allah and those who are hardly able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. The Imam said: 'The aged man who is not able (to fast) and the sick.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said about that verse: "The aged man, and the one who has a sickness in which he is always thirsty." [ibid.]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said in explanation of that verse: "The woman who is afraid for her

child and the aged man.” [ibid.]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from the Imams to this effect. And the “sick” mentioned in the tradition of Abū Basir (mentioned above) means that sick person whose illness continues the whole year till the next Ramadhan comes; such a sick person will not be required to fast the same number of other days.

Sa‘id said that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “Verily, there is *takbir* (*Allahu akbar*) on the day of ‘Idu ’1–fitr. I said: ‘There is no *takbir* except in ‘Idu ’1–Adhha.’

The Imam said: ‘There is *takbir* on that day, but it is *sunnah* in prayers of sunset, nightfall, dawn, noon and afternoon and in the two *rak‘ats* of ‘id.’ ” [al–‘Ayyashi]

Sa‘id an–Naqqash said: “Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) told me, ‘There is *takbir* on the eve of ‘Idu ’l–fitr but it is *sunnah*. I asked him; ‘And when it is?’ He said: ‘In the prayer of sunset, nightfall on the eve of ‘Idu ’l–fitr and in the prayers of dawn and ‘id. Then it is discontinued.’ I asked him: ‘How should I say it?’ He said: ‘You say

الله اكبر لا اله الا الله و الله اكبر الله اكبر على ما هدانا

(*Allahu akbar Allahu akbar laillaha illa’llahu wa’llahu a kbar Allahu akbaru ‘ala ma hadana*) — and it is the meaning of the words of Allah, **so that you shall complete the number (i.e. prayer) and that you glorify Allah for His guiding you.**

And the glorifying (*takbir*, التكبیر) is that you say: *Allahu akbar, la illaha illa’llah u wa’llahu akbar wa lillahi ’l–hamd*.’ And he said: ‘In a tradition the last *takbir* is four times.” [al–Kafi]

The author says: The first tradition includes prayers of noon and afternoon in glorifying (*takbir*, التكبیر) and the last one omits them. This difference may be an indication of the difference in the degrees of *sunnah*.

And the word of the Imam, “i.e. prayer”, perhaps indicate that the words of Allah, **so that you shall complete the number**, meant ‘complete the number of the days of fast with the prayer of ‘id and glorify Allah with prayers for His guiding you’.

This meaning is not against the meaning which we described earlier because it is an inference of a non-obligatory rule from a sentence containing an obligatory law.

It is like the tradition quoted earlier in which the Imam inferred from the verse, **so whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein** the undesirability of travel when one is in his abode on the first night.

The tradition has two different methods of *takbir*. This difference supports the opinion of some writers that glorifying in “that you glorify Allah” includes praising also, and that is why it is followed in this verse by the preposition on (‘*ala*, على) which is the preposition generally used after praise (*al-hamd*, الحمد)

Ibn Abi ‘Umayr said that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.): “May I be your ransom! Is it correct what we are told, that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) fasted for twenty-nine days much more than he fasted for thirty days?”

He (the Imam) said: ‘Allah did not create a single letter of this talk. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not fast but thirty days, because Allah says: **You shall complete the number**. Was the Messenger of Allah shortening it?’ ” [al-‘Ayyashi]

The author says: This question is for repudiation. The tradition shows what we have already mentioned that completing herer means completing the month of Ramadhan.

One of our companions narrates about the words of Allah, **so that you glorify Allah for His guiding you**, that glorifying means ‘extolling’ and guidance means ‘friendship of the Imams’ (*wilayah*, الولاية). [al-Mahasin]

The author says: The interpretation of guidance as friendship of the Imam is like explaining an idea by giving a clear example. Also, it may be treated as its inner meaning.

It is as has been mentioned in some traditions that in the verse: **Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you**, ‘ease’ means friendship (of the Imams) and ‘hardship’ means their enmity and friendship with enemies of Allah.

Hafs ibn al-Ghiyath asked Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah **the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur’an**, when (the fact is that) the Qur’an was sent down twenty years from its beginning to its end.

Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) said: “The Qur’an came all together in the month of Ramadhan down to the ‘Inhabited House’; then it came down (in segments) in a period of twenty years.”

Then the Imam said: “The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘The book of Ibrahim came down in the first night of the month of Ramadhan, and the Torah was sent down on the sixth of the month of Ramadhan, and the Zabūr was sent down on the eighteenth of the month of Ramadhan and the Qur’an was sent down on the twenty-third of the month of Ramadhan.’ ” [al-Kafi]

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) narrated by the Imam (a.s.) has been narrated by as-Suyūṭī in *ad-Durru ’1-man thūr*, with several chains from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) through Wathilah ibn al-Asqa’.

Ya’qūb said: “I heard a man asking Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) about the Night of Destiny, whether it occurred (once only) or it comes every year. Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) said:

'If the Night of Destiny were taken away, the Qur'an would be taken away.' ” [al-Kafi and Man la yahdhurruhu '1 faqih]

Ibn 'Abbas said: “The month of Ramadhan and the Blessed Night is the Night of Destiny because verily the Night of Destiny is the Blessed Night and it is in Ramadhan.

The Qur'an came down all together from reminder (*dhikr*, الذِّكْر) to the Inhabited House and it is the falling place of the stars in the lowest heaven where the Qur'an came down.

Later it descended on Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) piecemeal, about order, prohibition, and in battles.' ” [ad-Durru 'l-manth^{ur}]

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by others, like Sa'id ibn Jubayr. And it appears from this talk of Ibn 'Abbas that he inferred it from the Qur'anic verses; for example the words of Allah:

and the wise reminder (3:58),

And (I swear by) the Book written in an outstretched fine parchment and the inhabited house and the elevated canopy (52:2—5);

But nay! I swear by the falling of stars, and most certainly it is a great oath if you only know, most surely it is an honoured Qur'an in a Book that is hidden; none shall touch it save the purified ones (56:75—79) ;

and We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps (stars) and (made it) to guard (41:12)

And all His words are clear except what He said about the place of falling, that it is the lowest heaven and is the place of the Qur'an. The meaning of this assertion is obscure and the verses of the 56th chapter do not clearly show it.

Of course; it is narrated from *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that the Inhabited House is in heaven, and we shall explain it, God willing, in its proper place.

What should clearly be understood is that traditions are like the Qur'an, because there are, in traditions also, some clear ones and others ambiguous.

One very commonly finds in their talks which are based on hints and symbols, and especially so in the explanation of such facts as the Tablet, the Pen, the Curtain, the Heaven, the Inhabited House, the Swollen Sea etc.

Therefore, it is obligatory for a research scholar to strive his utmost to find out if there is any hint or context to determine the true meaning of a given text.

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