

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 219-220

(٢١٩) يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۚ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ الْعَفْوَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

(٢٢٠) فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ ۚ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۚ وَإِن تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْتَبْتَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance, Say: In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared. Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs, that you may ponder. (219)

About this world and the hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief maker from the well-doer; and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. (220)

Commentary

Qur'an: They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance:

According to the language, intoxicant (*khamr*, الخمر) is every liquid which is made to intoxicate.

The root word, *khamr* (الخمر) means to “to hide”. The liquor is called (*khamr* الخمر) because it hides reason and does not allow it to discriminate between right and wrong, between good and bad.

From the same root is derived *khimar* (الخمار) i.e., the veil which covers the head of a woman.

Khammartu 'l-'ina' (خمرت الاناء) ; means “I covered the opening of the pot”.

When yeast is added to dough, they say *ikhmarrati 'l-'ajin* (اخمرت العجين). And the yeast itself is called *khamirah* (الخميرة), because when it is mixed with flour, it covers the flour when it rises and ferments.

The Arabs did not know any alcoholic beverages except those made from grapes, dates and barley. Gradually, new kinds were invented and now its types and kinds are innumerable, with varying grades of intoxication.

But all are intoxicant (*khamr*, الخمر). *Maysir* (الميسر), according to the language, is gambling. The gambler is called *yasir* (الياسر).

The root word, (*yusr* اليسر) means ease. Gambling was called *maysir* (الميسر) because by it one might get wealth with ease without going to the trouble of earning and working.

The word *maysir* (الميسر) was mostly used for a particular method of gambling with arrows. It was also called *azlam* (الازلام) and *aqlam* (الاقلام). It was played by ten persons in the following manner:

A camel was purchased, slaughtered and divided into twenty-four parts. There were ten arrows: each had a separate name and its specified share. Their names (with their shares in brackets) are given hereunder:

Fadhah (1) *taw'am* (2) *raqib* (3) *hils* (4) *nafis* (5); *musbil* (6) *mu'alla* (7) The remaining three arrows were drawn with the names of the participants; anyone on whose name one of the first seven arrows was drawn took the number of the shares allotted to it; those on whose names the last-named three arrows were drawn got nothing and had to pay the price of the camel.

Qur'an: Say: In both of them ... sin is greater than profit:

Sin (*ithm*, الاثم) is near to evil (*dhanb*, الذنب) in meaning. It means a condition in the thing or in reason which prevents the man from getting the good.

In other words, *ithm* (الاثم) is that evil which brings unhappiness and failure even in other affairs, and disturbs the felicity of life even in other matters.

Clearly, alcoholic drinks and games of chance fit this description.

The health hazards of alcohol have been described in untold numbers of books written by ancient and modern physicians, in which they have listed the havoc created by it in the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the lungs, the nervous system, the veins and arteries, the heart and the organs of perception, i.e. the eyes, the tongue, etc.

The data collected by them show the vast magnitude of the damage to the millions and millions of people who are attacked by a variety of diseases caused by this killing poison.

The social and moral disasters appearing in the wake of addiction to drink are too well-known to need

any description.

Depravity of character, debauchery, shamelessness, the leakage of secrets, scandals, slanders, destruction and damage to others, crimes, murder — name any immorality, alcohol will lead to it.

In short, it nullifies all ethical laws and moral values upon which are based the felicity and bliss of this life and, more particularly, the values of chastity and probity.

Who can protect society from a drunkard who does not understand what he says and does not know what he does. Look at the crimes which have wrecked havoc throughout the world and have made human life a misery; search for their causes, and behind almost all of them you will see the hand of alcohol, directly or indirectly manipulating the minds of the criminals.

Nobody can deny the damage inflicted by alcohol upon the mind. Is there any need to describe how it negates the reason, puts the thinking process out of equilibrium and distorts the feelings and perceptions, not only during intoxication, but even afterwards?

This damage to the whole system of perception and reason is the biggest sin and disaster of alcohol, from which sprout all other sins and disasters.

Islam, as described earlier, has based its laws on true reason, and has most emphatically forbidden all such actions which hinder the proper functioning of reason. Intoxicants, games of chance, adultery, falsehood and other such sins come in this category.

The activities which are most damaging to the faculty of reason are drinking alcohol (among the deeds) and speaking lies (among the words).

These activities which nullify the rule of reason, and especially the politics which is based on alcohol and lies, endanger humanity, and destroy the foundation of happiness.

Whenever such a policy bears a fruit, it proves far bitterer than the previous one. When a burden proves unbearable, they add on some more weight and hope that the practice will make the bearer perfect, and would give him more strength!

Such endeavours result in failure; such activities end in loss. This one characteristic of Islam — that it has based its *shari'ah* on reason and has prohibited all such things which damage it — is enough to place it at the top of all the systems invented by human beings throughout the world.

Human beings, because of their animal tendencies, eagerly run towards the satisfaction of their lust. Lustful activities easily contaminate the environment, in contrast to chastity and piety.

It is easy to acquire a bad habit and very difficult to leave it. That is why Allah legislated such laws gradually, and led people to the ultimate goal step by step and sympathetically.

One of those widely-spread evils was the drinking of alcohol. And a cursory glance at the four verses revealed about the subject will show how, by easy stages, they were weaned from this bad habit.

First, Allah revealed,

Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know. (7:33)

This verse was revealed in Mecca, and it has clearly forbidden the sin (*harrama*, حَرَّمَ). Now we know that there is sin — great sin even — in alcohol, although at that time Allah did not clarify what sin was.

This ambiguity was, perhaps, a sort of compassion; it was as though the *shari'ah* wanted to overlook that sin of theirs for the time being. The same is the reason for the indirect hint in another verse of the same Meccan period:

And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes — you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision (16:67)

It separated intoxication from “goodly provision” but stopped short of declaring it as a “bad provision”.

Apparently people were not aware that intoxication was a great sin, until the verse was revealed:

O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say ... (4:43)

This verse was revealed at Medina, and it promulgated the partial prohibition of liquor in the best of the times and the best of the places — at the time of prayer in the mosque.

Reason and the context of the verse shows that this verse could not have been revealed after the verses of the chapters of *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* (which will be described shortly), because those verses promulgate total prohibition.

There was no reason why a partial ban should be imposed after a total prohibition. Also, we know that this prohibition was promulgated gradually, and such a case demands proceeding from an easier step to a more difficult one, and not vice versa.

Then came the verse under discussion. It says that there is in intoxicants and games of chance

a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.

This verse, revealed after the above-mentioned verse 4:43, promulgates total prohibition of intoxicants and games of chance. It clearly says that “there is great sin” in these two evils. And verse 7:33,

mentioned in the beginning, revealed at Mecca, had clearly prohibited sin.

This explanation exposes the absurdity of a commentator who says that this verse was not clear about the prohibition of liquor. First, let us give you a gist of what he says:

“This verse of the chapter of *al-Baqarah* was not clear about the prohibition of alcohol and gambling; the words of Allah that there is great sin in them only show that these are sinful acts, and sin means harm.

Even if we say that every harmful thing is prohibited, it does not include those things which are partially harmful and partially beneficial. That is why there was a difference of opinion about alcohol among the companions of the Prophet.

Some of them left drinking after the revelation of this verse, while others continued to drink. Perhaps, the drinkers thought that they could easily enjoy its profit safeguarding themselves from its harms.

When the ground was thus prepared, Allah revealed the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* which totally and clearly prohibits these things:

O you believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful ... Will you then desist? (5:93-94)

Now let us look critically at the above argument:

First: A major part of this argument rests on the assumption that sin means harm. But it is wrong. Just because in this verse it is followed by the words, ***and (some) profit for men***, it does not imply that its meaning is “harm” or “loss”, i.e. the opposite of “benefit”.

How can the word “sin” (*ithm*, **الاثم**) be taken to mean “harm” in the verses listed below? :-

And whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. (4:48)

And whoever conceals it (i.e. testimony), his heart is surely sinful. (2:283)

Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin. (5:29)

Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin. (24:11)

And whoever earns a sin, he earns it only against his own self. (4:111)

There are many such verses.

Second: The verse did not say that the order was given “because” of the harm inherent in alcohol. It just promulgated the law. There was no justification for the companions to follow their own opinion in this case.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the verse gives the reason for that order, that reason is not the harm, but the greatness of the harm as compared with the profit. The verse says in clear words, ***and their sin is greater than their profit.***

Such a clear declaration leaves no room at all for the exercise of one's own opinion. Opinion has no place in the presence of a clear order of Allah and the Apostle.

Third: Let us suppose, for the time being, that the verse did not clearly say that liquor and gambling were forbidden. But did it not say in clear words that they were great sins? Was not this verse revealed at Medina?

Had not verse 7:33, revealed years ago at Mecca; clearly prohibited the sin? What excuse can be offered by those companions who followed their own opinion in opposition to these verses of Mecca and Medina, which taken jointly clearly prohibit alcohol and games of chance?

Verse 7:33 prohibits all sins. And this verse under discussion uses the adjective 'great' (*kabir*, الكبير) and 'greater' (*akbar*, الاكبر) for the sins of alcohol and gambling.

In view of this nobody can remain in any doubt that these two evils are the greatest of all sins; nor can there remain any doubt about their absolute prohibition.

The Qur'an has termed murder, the hiding of testimony, lying and slander etc. as "sin", but it has not used the adjective "great" for any sin except polytheism

(....and whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. — 4:48)

and alcohol and games of chance.

In short, there is no doubt that this verse clearly prohibits these two sins.

Lastly the two verses of the chapter *al-Ma'idah* were revealed:

O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist? (5:93—94)

The last sentence (***Will you then desist?***) shows that the Muslims had not desisted from drinking alcohol even after the revelation of the verse of the chapter *al-Baqarah* under discussion; and that there was a need for such a strong admonition.

This much about liquor. So far as gambling is concerned its social evils and the ruin caused by it in the

structure of life are well-known, and need no description. But we shall further explain it in the fifth chapter.

Now we come back to the meaning of the words used in the verse. Sin (*ithm*, الأثم) has just now been explained. Greatness (*kibr*, الكبير) in volume is as numerousness (*kathrah*, الكثرة) in number. Their opposite are smallness (*sighar*, الصغر) and paucity (*qillah*, القلة) respectively.

These two adjectives are relative ones. When there are two things, one of them may be greater than the other, which then will be called smaller than the first.

But the first one which was called “greater” may be smaller than a third one. If there was no comparison, there would be neither the greatness nor the smallness; nor would there be numerousness or paucity.

Probably people first became aware of greatness when they looked at the size of material things around themselves. Later on they extended this concept to mental visions and ideas. Allah says:

Surely it (i.e. hell) is one of the greatest (misfortunes). (74:35);

a great (i.e. grievous) word it is that comes out of their mouths. (18:5);

great (i.e. hard) to the unbelievers is that which you call them to. (42:13)

‘Izam (العظم) has the same meaning as *kibar* (الكبير): both denote greatness.

Apparently *‘izam* (العظم) is derived from *‘azm* (bone, العظم); as the greatness of the body of an animal or man is related to the size of the skeleton – the bones inside — the word *‘azm* (bone, العظم) was metaphorically used for greatness, and gradually “greatness” became its first meaning.

Naf‘ (profit, النفع) is opposite of *dharar* (harm, loss, الضرر) These words are used for the things which are desired or disliked because of other things; while good and bad are used for the things which are liked or disliked by themselves.

Profits for men: It refers to the monetary gains as well as the amusement and merry-making for which people indulge in these two sins.

Allah used here the plural form (profits); but while comparing it with sin He used the singular form (their sin is greater than their profit). As the comparison was in size, and not in number, there was no reason to use the plural which describes the number, not the size.

Qur’an: And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared.

‘Afw (العفو) originally meant ‘to go to a thing to get it.’ Then, keeping in view various connections and relations, it came to be used for forgiveness, obliteration of footprints and moderation in spending.

It is this last meaning which is intended in this verse, and that is why it has been translated as “whatever can be spared”.

In this verse, the reply fits the question in the same way as was explained in the verse 2:215,

They ask you to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents

...

Qur'an: Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may ponder about this world and the hereafter.

Fid-dunya wa 'l-akhirah. (فى الدنيا و الاخرة) literally means “in this world and the hereafter”. But it does not mean ‘you may ponder while you are in this world and in the hereafter’.

It refers to the subject upon which men are expected to ponder. That is why we have translated it “may ponder about this world ...”

The verse exhorts the believers to ponder on the realities and affairs of both the worlds. This world is a place which Allah has created for you to live in and for you to earn in it what might be beneficial to you in your permanent home, i.e. the hereafter.

That is the place where you will return to your Lord and He will give you the recompense for what you did in this world.

This verse urges people to enquire about, and investigate, the realities of existence, the percepts of the beginning and the end and the mysteries of nature; and to think and ponder upon the social concepts, moral and ethical values, and the laws of life governing individuals and groups.

In short, man is expected to think about all the knowledge right from his beginning upto his returning to his Lord, as well as all the affairs coming between these points which have any bearing on the happiness and misery of mankind.

This verse also shows that although the Qur'an demands complete obedience from man towards the command of Allah and His Apostle, without any if and but, yet it likes people to ponder on those commands and their philosophy so that they may grasp their realities and, instead of blindly following the laws, may see the light of those brilliant teachings and follow that light to ultimate destination.

Thus Allah does make clear probably means the explanation of the philosophy behind the given laws and commands, and the clarification of the fundamentals of the faith and belief.

Qur'an: And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: “To set right for them (their affairs) is good.”

There is a hint, a clear indication even, in this verse that it was revealed to lighten some burden — it

allows mingling with the orphans, and then goes on to say:

and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you.

It shows that prior to this verse the rules concerning the guardianship of the orphans were hard and difficult, which had caused anxiety and alarm among the Muslims, and which led them to ask the question referred to in the verse.

There were some verses about the orphans, very severe in tone:

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2);

As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter into burning fire. (4:10)

Apparently the verse under discussion was revealed after these verses; and the traditions, which will be quoted later, support this view.

The *islah* (to set right, اصلاح) is used here as a common noun. It denotes, according to the usage of the Arabic language, really good management, not just a show; and the sentence, ***and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer***, points to this.

Qur'an: and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren:

This sentence refers to the Islamic concept of the equality of all the believers. This concept nullifies all distinctions which are the basic cause of every mischief which appears in society.

It abolishes various types of injustice and rebellion; putting oneself on a high pedestal, treating others as one's slaves, thinking of them as an inferior, and weak species.

This abolition of differences creates equilibrium in various social weights; there appears a fine balance between a weak orphan and his powerful guardian, between a rich tycoon and a wretched beggar, and so on. Allah says:

The believers are but brethren. (49:10)

Now, the verse under discussion allows the guardian to mingle with the orphan only when it is done like the mingling of two brothers who have equal obligation towards each other.

If something is taken from an orphan's property, then something of equal value must be given to him and added to his property. In this context, this verse runs parallel to the verse mentioned earlier,

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2)

A comparison between the two verses shows that the verse under discussion has somewhat lessened the burden of the guardians; and the sentence, ***and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer***, also hints at this relaxation of rigour.

The meaning is: Now you may mingle with your wards, the orphans (and this is the relaxation of the previous rule); but the mingling should be as of two brothers who have equal obligations towards each other.

If this condition is fulfilled, then there should be no anxiety and fear on your part. If that mingling is with good intentions, and in order to set their affairs right for them, then it is good; and the reality cannot be hidden from Allah, and He will not reproach you just because you mingled and mixed with the orphans, provided you did it for their good, like brethren, and Allah knows the difference between a mischief-maker and a well-doer.

Qur'an: *and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well doer:*

Here the preposition, from (*min*, من) has been used after “knows” (*ya'lamu*, يعلم); probably it is a hint that “knows” in this verse has the significance of “distinguishes”; and the sentence means, “Allah distinguishes the mischief-maker from the well-doer.”

'*Anat* (العنت) means difficulty and hardship.

Traditions

'Ali ibn Yaqtin said: “al-Mahdi asked Abu 'I-Hasan al-Kazim (a.s.) about whether intoxicants were prohibited in the Book of Allah, because the people know that it is not allowed but do not know that it is prohibited.

“The Imam said: ‘But it is prohibited.’ He asked: ‘Where in the Book of Allah is it forbidden? O Abu 'I-Hasan!’ He replied: ‘The word of Allah:

Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice ...’ (7:33)

Then the Imam explained: ‘And as for sin, it is intoxicants themselves, because Allah said somewhere else,

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: “In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profits, for men, and their sin is greater than their profits.”

So the sin according to the Book of Allah is intoxicants and games of chance, and their sin is greater than their profit, as Allah has said.'

“al-Mahdi said: ‘O ‘Ali ibn Yaqtin! This is the legal decree of the house of Hashim.’ I said: ‘You spoke the truth, O leader of the faithful! Praise be to Allah who did not take this knowledge out from you, O people of the house!’ ”

‘Ali ibn Yaqtin says: “By God, al-Mahdi could not restrain himself from saying to me, ‘You spoke the truth, O Rafidi!’ ” [al-Kafi]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition can be understood from the commentary.

There is a tradition narrated from Abū Basir that one of the two Imams (i.e. fifth or sixth — a.s.) said: “Verily Allah made a house for sin, then He made a door for the house, then He made a lock for the door, then He made a key for the lock; and (that) key of sin is intoxicants.” [al-Kafi]

There is another tradition from Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.): “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Verily intoxicants are the head of every sin!’ ” [ibid.]

There is a tradition narrated by Isma‘il, in which he said: “Abu Ja‘far (a.s.) went into the Sacred Mosque; some Qurayshites saw him and said: ‘He is the god of the people of Iraq.’

Someone said: ‘If you send one of you to him.’ So a young man from among them came to him and asked: ‘O Uncle! What is the greatest of the great (sins)?’ He said: ‘Drinking alcohol.’ ” [ibid.]

There is a tradition narrated by Abu ‘1-Bilad, that one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Sadiq — a.s.) said: “Allah has not been disobeyed with anything more powerful than drinking alcohol.

Verily one of them leaves the obligatory prayers, and jumps upon his mother and daughter and sister, and he does not know.” [ibid.]

“An atheist asked Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.): ‘Why did Allah prohibit alcohol when there is nothing more delicious than it?’ (The Imam said: ‘He prohibited it because it is the mother of all wicked things and the head of every evil.

There come a time to the drinker ,of it when he loses his reason, then he does not know his Lord, and leaves no sin but that he commits it ...’ ” [al-Ihtijaj]

The author says: The traditions explain one another and experience and observation support them.

A tradition from Jabir is reported that Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) said: “The Messenger of Allah cursed ten persons concerning an alcoholic beverage — the one who plants it, the one who guards it, the one who squeezes its juice out, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who transports it, the one to whom it is transported, the one who sells it, the one who purchases it, and the one who eats its price.”

[*al-Kafi*]

Another tradition says that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Cursed is he, cursed is he who sits at a table where alcohol is drunk.’ ” [*ibid., al-Mahasin*]

The author says: The above two traditions are confirmed by the words of Allah,

and do not help one another in sin and transgression. (5:3)

as-Sadiq reports through his chains, from Abū Amamah that he said: “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘There are four persons at whom Allah will not look (with mercy) on the day of resurrection — the one who is disobedient (to his parents), the one who helps a man and then reminds him of it, the one who denies the destiny (decreed by Allah), and the one who habitually drinks alcohol.’ ” [*al-Khisal*]

Ibnū 'sh-Shaykh has reported in *al-Amali*, through his chains, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the Prophet said: “My Lord, Great is His Glory! has sworn thus:

No servant of mine will drink alcohol in this world but that I shall make him drink on the day of resurrection from the boiling water (of hell) as much as he had drunk alcohol; (it would make no difference) whether after that he is punished or forgiven.”

The Prophet said: “Verily the one who drinks alcohol shall come on the day of resurrection, with blackened face, blue eyes, a slanting jaw-bone and running saliva, licking his tongue from his back-side.”

Abū Ja'far (a.s.) said: “It is an obligation upon Allah (i.e. Allah has made it incumbent upon Himself) that He will make the drinker of alcohol drink what comes out from the vulva of fornicating women.

From that vulva will come out pus and thick blood, its heat and stink will offend (even) the inmates of the fire.” [*at-Tafsir, al-Qummi*]

The author says: These traditions may be supported by the word of Allah,

Surely the tree of Zaqqūm is the food of the sinful, like molten brass; it shall boil in (their) bellies, like the boiling of hot water. Seize him, then drag him down into the midst of Hell; then pour over his head of the torment of the boiling water: ‘Taste (it); you forsooth are the mighty, the honourable!’ (44:43—49)

There are numerous traditions with the same meaning as described above.

There is a tradition narrated by al-Washsha' that he heard Abu'1-Hasan (a.s.) saying: “*Maysir* (الميسر) is gambling.” [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: Traditions giving this explanation are numerous; and there is no doubt whatsoever

about the meaning.

It is reported, under the verse,

And they ask you as to what they should spend ... ,

that Ibn ‘Abbas said: “Verily, some people from the companions, when they were told to spend in the way of Allah, came to the Prophet and said:

‘We do not know what this “spending” is which we have been ordered in our properties. So, what should we spend from it?’ Then Allah revealed:

and they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: ‘Whatever can be spared’

And before that, one used to spend his wealth until he no longer had anything left to give in alms, and until there remained no property to eat from.” [ad-Durru ‘l-manthūr]

It is narrated from Yahya that he was told that Ma‘adh ibn-Jabal and Tha‘labah came to the Messenger of Allah and said: “O Messenger of Allah!

Verily we have our servants and families; what, therefore, should we spend from our properties?” Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: ‘Whatever can be spared’ ” [ibid.]

It is reported that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word (‘*afw* العفو); which we have translated as “whatever can be spared” that ‘*afw* is the middle (course). [ibid., al-‘Ayyashi]

And it is written that al-Baqir (a.s.) and as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that it is modicum, a sufficiency. And the tradition of Abū Basir interprets it as frugality, thrift. [al-‘Ayyashi]

It is reported from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse:

And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean (25:67)

that he said: “This (stage) is after this stage; it is the middle.” [ibid]

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: “ ‘*afw* (العفو) is what is in excess of the maintenance of the year.” [Majma‘u ‘l-bayan]

The author says: The tradition express the same meanings in different words; and the last one gives an example of ‘*afw* (العفو)

There are innumerable traditions showing the excellence of alms, its ways, place and quantity; some of

which shall be quoted in the relevant places, God willing.

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse:

And they ask you concerning the orphans ...

that he said: "When the verse:

(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire,

everyone who had any orphan with him turned him out; and they asked the Messenger of Allah about turning them out. Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: ' To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer ... ' "[at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: When Allah revealed:

And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner ... (6: 153)

and

those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly ... ,

every one who had an orphan with him went (to his home) and separated his (orphan's) food from his own food and his drink from his own drink; and he put some extra portion in the orphan's food, and kept it reserved for him till he ate it or it deteriorated and he threw it away.

This system proved very hard for them, so they mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you concerning the orphans ... and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren...

Then they mixed their food with their own food and their drink with their own drink. [ad-Durru 'l-manth^{ur}]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ata' and Qatadah.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/al-mizan-exegesis-quran-volume-3-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-tabatabai/suratul-baqarah-verses-219-220>