

(٨٩) وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ
يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى
الْكَافِرِينَ

(٩٠) بِسْمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَن يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ
فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ
مُّهِينٌ

(٩١) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا
وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ

(٩٢) وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

(٩٣) وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِسْمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيْمَانُكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ

And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforesaid they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers (89).

Evil is that for which they sold their souls – that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they returned with wrath upon wrath, and there is a disgraceful punishment for the unbelievers (90).

And when it is said to them, “Believe in what Allah has revealed,” they say: “We believe in that which was revealed to us;” and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. Say: “Why then did you kill Allah’s prophets before if you were indeed believers?” (91).

And most certainly Musa came to you with clear evidence, then you took the calf (for a god) in his absence and you were unjust (92).

And (remember) when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain over you: “Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and listen (to Our words)”. They said: “We hear and disobey.” And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: “Evil is that which your belief bids you if you are believers” (93).

Commentary

Qur’an: And when there came to them a Book: The context shows that “a Book” refers to the Qur’an.

Qur’an: and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved: It appears that whenever the pagans of Arabia clashed with the Jews, the latter prayed for victory by the right of the Prophet, and by his prophethood and emigration; and that this was their usual custom before the advent of the Prophet, so much so that even the pagans knew it of them. It all is implied in the word, “they used to”.

Qur’an: but when there came to them that which they did recognize: They knew that Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was the awaited Prophet, because all the attributes and particulars mentioned in their books fitted on him perfectly. And yet they denied his truth.

Qur’an: Evil is that for which they sold their souls. . .: “*Baghyan* “ (بغياً = out of envy) is in accusative case, explaining the reason why they disbelieved in Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) even after recognizing him.

What they did was “out of envy”, “that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases” was the object of their envy. “So they returned with wrath upon wrath”, that is, they returned doubly enraged. It may also mean that they invited double wrath of Allah upon themselves – the first because they disbelieved in Torah and the second because they disbelieved in the Qur’an.

The verse says that they were partisans of the Prophet long before he was born; they prayed to Allah for victory by his name and his Book. When the Prophet was sent and the Qur’an was revealed, they very

well recognized that he was the Prophet in whose name they used to pray for victory, and whose coming they awaited. But they were overwhelmed by envy and arrogance.

No sooner did the Prophet begin his call than they denied his truth, and forgot all that they used to tell about the awaited prophet. It was not surprising as they had earlier disbelieved in Torah too. Thus they committed disbelief after disbelief, and invited the wrath of Allah upon themselves, not once but twice.

Qur'an: *and they deny what is besides that:* That is, they claim that they do not believe in any book other than Torah; but the fact is that they do not believe even in Torah.

Qur'an: *Say: "Why then did you kill Allah's prophets. . ."* The conjunctive, "then", serves to relate this question to their claim, "We believe in that which was revealed to us". If this claim of yours is correct then why did you kill the prophets of Allah? And why did you disbelieve in Musa by taking the calf for a god? And why did you say, "We hear and disobey", when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you?

Qur'an: *and they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts:* "*al-Ishrab*" (الإشراب = to make to imbibe, to make to drink). Instead of saying 'the love of the calf', the verse says, "to imbibe the calf", for emphasis, as though they had drunk the calf itself into their hearts. The sentence thus contains two metaphors – "the calf" for the love of the calf, and imbibing into hearts for loving.

Qur'an: *Say: "Evil is that which your belief bids you. . ."* It is a derisive expression ridiculing them for their killings of the prophets, their disbelief in Musa and their arrogance in committing sin after sin and then claiming that they were the true believers. The verse tauntingly asks them: Is this what your belief bids you?

Tradition

As-Sadiq (a.s.) explained the verse, ***and when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have. . .***, in this way: "The Jews found in their books that Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), the Messenger of Allah, would migrate and settle between `Ayr and Uhud. So, they went out looking for that place. They passed by a mountain called Hadad¹; and they said:

`Hadad –and Uhud are the same'. So they dispersed nearby; some of them settled at Tayma¹, and some others at Fadak and yet others at Khaybar. Those at Tayma¹ once desired (to see) some of their brethren (at another place). A Bedouin from (the tribe of) Qays passed by them and they hired (his camels).

He told them: 'I shall take you from between `Ayr and Uhud.' They told him: 'When you pass between the two, tell us.' When they reached the land of Medina, he said: 'That is `Ayr and this is Uhud.' They descended from his camels and said to him:

‘We have now found (the place of) our desire; now we do not need your camels, you may go wherever you wish.’ Then they wrote to their brethren at Fadak and Khaybar: ‘We have found the place, come therefore to us.’

They wrote in reply: ‘Now we have settled in this place, and have acquired properties; and we are so near to you. Therefore, when it will happen (i.e., when the Prophet will come to Medina), we shall rush to you.’

Those Jews acquired properties in the land of Medina. When their wealth increased, its news came to the ears of Tubba² and he attacked them. They fortified themselves and he laid siege to them. (And they used to take pity on the weekly soldiers of Tubba` and throw dates and barley to them at night. This came to the notice of Tubba` and he softened towards them.³

He assured them of their safety and they came down to him. He told them: ‘I do like this place of yours and I am inclined to settle down here.’ They said: ‘It is not for you. It is the migration place of a prophet; and no one may settle down here until that happens.’

Thereupon he said: ‘Then I am leaving among you some of the members of my clan, so that when it happens they shall help and assist him.’ Thus he left behind the two tribes you see today, the Aws and the Khazraj.

When these two (tribes) increased in number, they used to grab the properties of the Jews. At that time, the Jews used to warn them: ‘Oh! When Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is sent (by Allah) we shall certainly turn you out from our town and properties.’

But when Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was sent as Prophet, it was the Helpers (the Aws and the Khazraj) who believed in him and the very Jews denied him! This is the meaning of the words of Allah, ***and aforesaid they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved. . .***⁴

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarṣir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abḥ Hatim and Abḥ Na'aym (in his *Dala'ilu 'n-nubuwwah*) have narrated from Ibn `Abbas that he said: ‘The Jews used to pray for victory against the Aws and the Khazraj by the right of the Messenger of Allah, before he was sent as prophet.’

However, when Allah raised him from the Arabs, the same Jews disbelieved in him and denied what they used to say about him. Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Bishr ibn Bara' ibn Ma'rṣr and Dawḥd ibn Salamah told them:

‘O Jews! Fear Allah and accept Islam; because it was you who used to pray for victory against us by the right of Muhammad, while we were polytheists, and you used to tell us that he would (soon) be sent, describing to us his attributes.’

Salam ibn Mushkḥm, one of the tribe of Banḥ an-Nadḥr, said to them: ‘He has not brought to us anything we know; and he is not the prophet we were telling you about.’ Then Allah sent down (the

verse):

'And when there came to them a Book from Allah . . . '⁵

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in his *Dala'ilu 'n-Nubuwwah* from the chains of `Ata' and ad-Dahhak, from Ibn `Abbas that he said: "The Jews of Ban^ق Qurayzah and Ban^ق an-Nad^قr, before Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was sent as prophet, used to pray to Allah for victory, invoking Him against the disbelievers and saying:

'O Allah! We seek Thy help, by the right of the untaught prophet, to let us triumph over them.' And they were given victory. But when there came to them that which they did recognize (i.e., Muhammad – s.a.w.a.), and actually they had no doubt whatsoever about him, they disbelieved in, and denied him.⁶

The author says: Similar Tradition have been narrated by various other chains also.

A commentator, after pointing to the last mentioned Tradition and others like them, says: "These Tradition – weak as their narrators are and incompatible as they are with the narrated Tradition – are anomalous in their meaning too, because they maintain that the prayer for victory was made `by the person of the Prophet' or, as some Tradition say, `by the right of the Prophet'; and such a prayer is against the *shar^قah*; and no one has any right on Allah. How could prayer be offered with the help of such a non-existent right?

Reply: This objection results from not understanding the meaning of "right" and oath. Oath is used to join and bind a proposition, order, request or exclamation to an honourable and sublime thing – if that proposition etc. is wrong, the honour and sublimity of the thing bound to it, is tarnished and damaged.

When you say, "By my life, Zayd is standing", you have bound the honour of your life to the truth of your statement; if that statement be wrong, your life would lose its honour. When you say, "By my life, I shall do this work", or "I entreat you, by my life, to do this work", you have, in the same way, put the honour of your life at stake for that work; if you did not do it, or if the second party did not heed to your entreaty, your life would lose its honour, its dignity. Two things emerge from this explanation:

First: Oath is the strongest method of emphasizing a talk, as the scholars of literature have confirmed.

Second: The thing by which one swears, must be more honourable and more important than the proposition etc. which it is related to; because a proposition cannot be emphasized with the help of a less important thing. Allah has sworn, in His Book, by His own name and attributes.

For example, So, by your Lord,

We would most certainly question them all (15:92).

Also, He quotes others swearing by His name and attributes:

By Allah, our Lord . . . (6:23);

Then by Thy Might I will surely make them live an evil life (38:82).

But He has also sworn by His Prophet, His angels and His books, as well as by His creatures like the heaven, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the night, the day, the mountains, the rivers, the towns, the man, the tree, the fig and the olive.

It could not be possible unless these things had a real dignity of their own bestowed on them by Allah; every such thing must have an attribute reflecting one of the divine attributes, or an activity related to the divine sublimity and every dignity and honour emanates from Him.

Now, what objection can be raised against a suppliant, if he prays to Allah for something entreating Him by one of the above-mentioned things – considering the fact that Allah Himself has sworn by those things and has given them a sublimity and dignity?

Why an exception should be made in case of the Apostle of Allah only? Is it not an affront to the Prophet to remove him from this common way of showing respect? By my life, Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah (s. a. w. a.) is not less honourable in the eyes of Allah than an Iraqi fig or a Syrian olive! These people forget that Allah Himself has sworn by His Prophet:

By your life! They were blindly wandering on in their intoxication (15:72).

Now we should have a look at the “right”. Right, as opposed to wrong, means a factual thing, existing outside imagination, like the earth and the man; in short, every real and substantial thing, as opposed to illusory and imaginary ones. Monetary and other social rights come within this category because they are firmly established by the society.

The Qur'an has nullified all the rights claimed by man, except that which is laid down and confirmed by Allah – in creation as well as in legislation. Right in the legislative and social spheres is that which Allah Himself has established, like the monetary rights, the rights of the brothers and the rights of the parents etc.

It is necessary to mention here that no one can lay down a right against Allah; no one can make it incumbent upon Allah to do or give something. But it is possible for Allah to make it incumbent upon Himself to do something, or to give someone something, all in the sphere of legislation. Then that “someone” shall have a right on Allah which Allah Himself has established.

For example, Allah says:

even so (now) it is a right on Us(that) We deliver the believers (10:103);

And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles: Most surely they shall be assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones (37:171–173)

The assistance, promised here, is general and unconditional, not restricted by any proviso. Getting deliverance is the right of the believers on Allah, and getting assistance is, in the same way, the right of the apostles. By establishing this right on Himself for the apostles, Allah has enhanced their dignity and honour.

And there is nothing to prevent a suppliant from entreating Allah to help and deliver him from his difficulties, by the right of His apostle or apostles. Allah Himself has laid down that right and He Himself swears by every honourable thing, showing us that such oaths and adjurations are in fact liked by Him.

In short, there is no hitch in entreating Allah by His Apostle or by the right of His Apostle. The same applies to entreating Him by His friends, or by the right of His friends. He has established a right for them on Himself that He will surely assist them in the path of happiness, with every related assistance.

The claim that “no one has any right on Allah” is just nonsense. Of course, no one can lay down a right for himself on Allah; no one can make it incumbent on Allah to do some thing. But a suppliant does not pray to Allah by a right forced on Allah by someone else; he pleads to Him by a right which He Himself has established pledging His Own word; and His Promise is never broken.

1. In the printed copy of at-Tafsīr of al-`Ayyash (vol. 1, p.49) and what has been quoted from him in al-Bihar (vol. 15, p.226), al-Burhan (vol.1, p.128) and Majma'u '1-bayAn (vol. 1, p.158) the name has appeared as Hadad. But we could not find such a name in geographical dictionaries. Perhaps it is a corruption of Hadad which is a mountain overlooking Tayma'; (see Makamu '1-bayann, vol. 2, p. 229; al-Qamūs, vol. 1, p. 287 and Taju '1-'arūs, vol. 2, p. 333) or it may be another reading of Hadad.(ed.)

2. التُّبَع (at -Tubba`) was the title of the kings of Yemen.

3. The sentences in parenthesis are not in al-Mīzan. They have been added from the quotation of al-`Ayyash, given in Bīharu '1-anwar, vol. 15, p.226. (m)

4. Al-`Ayyash

5. ad-Durru '1-manth

6. ad-Durru 'l-manth

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