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Section 14

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 116–117

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانُونٌ

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

116. "They said: 'Allah has taken to Himself a son'. Glory be to Him! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth: all are obedient to Him. "

117. "Originator (is He) of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a matter to be, He only says to it 'Be' and it is."

The Jews, Christians, and Pagans and their Superstitions

The superstitious belief that *Allah* has got a child is accepted by the Christians, a group of the Jews, and some pagans. All of them believe that He has chosen a child for Himself.

Surah At-Taubah No.9 verse 30 says:

"The Jews call 'Uzair (Ezra) a son of Allah and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! "

Also, about the pagans, Surah Yunus, No 10, verse 68 says:

"They say: 'Allah has begotten a son!' –Glory be to Him! He is Self-Sufficient!..."

There are many other verses in the Holy Qur'an that refer to this inappropriate idea of theirs.

To condemn this superstition, the first verse of the verses under discussion says:

"They said: 'Allah has taken to Himself a son'. Glory be to Him!..."

Why would *Allah* need to take a son for Himself! Is He in need of one? Is He limited? Does He need to be helped? Or, is it necessary for Him to have any descendants?

"...Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth..."

"...all are obedient to Him."

He is not only the Possessor of all things and creatures in the world of existence, but also,

"Originator (is He) of the heavens and the earth..."

And He has created all of them without any previous design, preparation, or without being in need of any pre-existing material.

What necessity is He forced by to have a child while everything is immediately ready for Him?

"...and when He decrees a matter to be, He only says to it 'Be' and it is."

Explanation

Besides the above verse, the phrase / kun fayakon / **'Be' and it is'** has occurred in several verses of the Qur'an, including the followings:

1. Surah 'Ale-'Imran, No.3, verse 47
2. Surah 'Ale-'Imran, No.3, verse 59
3. Surah Al-'An-'am, No.6, verse 73
4. Surah An-'Nahl, No. 16, verse 40
5. Surah Maryam, No. 19, verse 35
6. Surah Yasin, No.36, verse 82
7. Surah Qafir, No.40, verse 68

This phrase is about the Will of *Allah* and His Absolute Sovereignty on the subject of creation.

To understand this well, we should know the meaning of the Unity of Acts and the creation of all created beings by *Allah's* Will. Precisely; Unity of Acts, in terms of His acts, does not need any help or helper from outside Himself. Should He use any means for that purpose, the means itself is created by Him and used by Him.

It is not that He needs some help from outside Himself which is not connected to Him, and to be brought from somewhere else, or if so *Allah* would not be able to do whatever He wants to. No, it is not like that at all. *Allah's* Acts need none but Himself and His Will alone.

The explanation is that the objective meaning of the phrase / kun fayakun / (**'Be! and it is**) is not that *Allah* issues a verbal command with the word 'Be', but the reality is that when He wills something to exist it exists. There will be no time between that Will and its existence, not even a moment.

In other words, the phrase / kun fayakun / (**'Be! and it is**) is only to bring home to the human mind the Omnipotent Will which, properly speaking, can never be translated into any verbal expression. Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), of whom the holy Prophet (S) had declared: 'I (i.e. the holy Prophet himself) *am the City of knowledge and Ali is its Gate*', in referring to the phrase mentioned in this verse; –regarding the Divine Omnipotence and the execution of His Will says:

"Not by sound uttered, nor by voice heard, His Word, blessed be He, is Action proceeding from Him ". [1](#)

There is a similar idea in a tradition from Hadrat Musa-ibn-Ja'far, the seventh Imam (as), cited in Al-Kafi as well as in Touhid Saduq. [2](#)

This meaning, with a slightly different explanation, is also mentioned in Tafsir-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 146.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 118–119

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ

118. "And the ignorant said: 'Why does Allah not speak to us or a Sign comes not to us?' Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made clear the Signs to people who are sure."

119. "Verily, We have sent you (O' Muhammad) with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner and you shall not be questioned about the inhabitants of the Blazing Fire."

Another Pretext

Similar to the pretexts of the Jews, in the initial verses of the above group of verses, another party of pretext-seekers are referred to, whom, apparently, were the Arab pagans. It says:

"And the ignorant said: 'Why does Allah not speak to us or a Sign comes not to us?'..."

This group of unbelieving people, whom the Qur'an has referred, to as / allaḥina la ya'lamuna / 'the ignorant' had, indeed, two illogical demands:

1. Why does *Allah* not speak to them?
2. Why does sign not come to them?

In answer to these selfish demands, the Qur'an says:

"...Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made clear the Signs to people who are sure."

If they truly intend to understand the Truth, these very verses revealed to the Prophet (S) are clear Signs to the rightfulness of his Call. Why should some verses be independently and directly revealed to each individual separately? And, what does it mean that a person insists that *Allah* must speak to him, himself, directly?

A similar idea to this is also stated in **Surah Al-Muddaththir, No.74 verse 52** thus:

"For sure, each one of them wants to be given scrolls (of revelation) spread out!"

This manner, in principle, besides that it is not necessary, contrasts with Divine Wisdom, because firstly, the rightfulness of the prophethood of prophets has been proved to all peoples by way of the verses which were revealed to them themselves.

Secondly, it is not possible for verses and miracles to be revealed to every individual, for this need a special kind of eligibility, preparation, and purity of soul. It closely resembles to a situation in which all the wires of the vast electrical system of a city (the strong thick wires and the very thin ones) be expected to receive the same extraordinarily high amount of electricity that immediately arrives into the initial thick wires directly from the main generator.

This expectation is certainly a vain, incorrect expectation. The engineer who has arranged these various wires for different purposes has calculated the capability of each wire. Some of them convey the electricity directly and immediately from the generator, while some others do it by means of some intermediary wires and with a variety of voltages.

The next verse addresses the holy Prophet (S) and defines his duty regarding their demands for miracles and other pretexts. It says:

"Verily, We have sent you (O' Muhammad) with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner..."

That is, O' Muhammad (S) your responsibility is that you proclaim our commandments to all people, to illustrate the miracles, and to express the facts logically and with clear statements. This action should coincide with persuading the good doers and warning the evil doers. This is your duty.

"...and you shall not be questioned about the inhabitants of the Blazing Fire."

Explanation: Their Hearts are All Alike!

In the above verses we learnt that the Qur'an declares:

"Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike."

This idea points to the fact that the passing of time and the instructions of prophets (S) should have had such an effect that the later generations could gain a larger portion of knowledge so that they would put aside vain statements which are a sign of ignorance.

But unfortunately, this group of people usually has no share in the process of development. They are always retrogressive so that it seems as if they belonged to thousands of years ago, and the passing of time has not affected the least change in their minds.

Two Instructive Principles

'Glad tidings' and 'warning' or 'encouragement' and 'threat', form a great part of the motives of educational and social affairs. A person should be both encouraged for his good deeds and punished for his wrong actions, in order to be prepared for paving the first path and avoiding the second route.

Mere encouragement is not enough for the attainment of improvement in an individual or a society, because in this condition the individual is sure that committing sin does not harm him.

The present followers of Christ (as), for example, believe in 'ransom'. They think that Jesus (as) has been sacrificed for their sins. Even their clergymen sometimes promise them Heaven, and forgiveness for their sins on behalf of the Lord. It is evident that such a group of people may easily commit sins.

In a Guide to Christian Workers of the New American Standard Version Bible (pg. 1295), it is cited about Christ (as):

"He tasted death for me, thus He bore the supreme penalty of my sins."

Surely this incorrect idea makes its followers bold in committing wrongs and corruption.

In short, those who think mere encouragement is enough in training men (irrespective of children or adults) and threats, punishment and revenge have no place and should be completely put aside, are completely wrong.

On the other hand, those who, neglecting the encouraging aspect, think that training is based only on threats and terror are on a wrong path as well.

These two groups have a mistaken conception of Man, because they do not have this fact in mind: that

Man is made up of a combination of hope and fear, love of living and hatred of destruction. His nature is to attract gain and to repel loss.

Observing the parallel between these two principles is particularly essential since if encouragement and hope goes beyond limits, it results in boldness and negligence. And when threats and punishment is abundant, it produces despair and extinguishes the flames of love and vitality.

For the exact same reason, in the verses of the Qur'an, the terms 'glad tidings' and 'warning' have occurred in conjunction with each other. It has happened that the term 'glad tidings' has sometimes preceded the term 'warning', like in the verse under discussion; and sometimes it is vice versa, as in **Surah Al-A'raf No.7 Verse 188**, which says:

"...I am a warner and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have Faith."

In fact, in the majority of these verses of the Qur'an, 'glad tidings' has preceded 'warning'. This may be because, in general, the Mercy and Grace of *Allah* have preceded His Wrath and punishment, as we call Him in supplications: *"O' He Whose Mercy precedes His Wrath."*

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 120-121

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنَّ آتِبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

120. "For, never, will the Jews be pleased with you nor the Christians unless you follow their religion. Say: 'Behold Allah's guidance is the only (true) guidance. And verily if you follow their desires after the knowledge has come to you, you shall have from Allah neither protector nor helper. "

121. "Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read, they are the ones that truly believe in it, and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall (surely) be the losers."

Occasion of Revelation

On the occasion of revelation of the first of the above verses, it is narrated from Ibn Abbas that the Jews in Medina and the Christians from Najran expected that the Prophet of Islam (S) would traditionally accept the same Qiblah as they had.

When *Allah* altered the Qiblah from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah, they became disheartened with the Prophet of Islam (S). (Perhaps, some of the Muslim believers, too, criticized that they should not do

anything that would offend the Jews and the Christians).

The above verse was revealed and informed the Prophet (S) that that group of Jews and Christians would be satisfied with him neither by coming into agreement upon the Qiblah nor by anything else except that he would follow their creeds. [3](#)

Some others have narrated that the Prophet (S) insisted very much on convincing them to accept Islam. The above verse was revealed telling him (S) to disregard that idea because never would they be pleased with him unless he followed their religion. [4](#)

There are also various narrations upon the occasion of revelation of the second of the above verses. Some of the commentators believe that this verse was revealed about those people who came with Ja'far-ibn-Abitalib from Abyssina to Medina.

They had joined Islam and accompanied him when he left there. They were 40 men, thirty-two of whom were from Abyssina and eight men were from the monks of Syria among whom there was a famous Christian monk by the name of Bahira. [5](#)

Some other commentators believe that the verse was revealed about some people from among the Jews such as Abdillāh-ibn-Salam, Shu'bat-ibn-'Amru, Tamam-ibn-Yahuda, and so on who accepted the invitation of Prophet Muhammad (S) and became true believers. [6](#)

Two Unsatisfiable Groups!

The previous verse relieves Hadrat Muhammad (S) of any responsibility concerning those stubborn misguided people. Now, this verse, elaborating on the same idea, informs the Prophet (S) of the reason why it is so:

"For, never will the Jews be pleased with you nor the Christians unless you follow their religion..."

"...Say: 'Behold Allah's guidance is the only (true) guidance'..."

Allah's guidance is a guidance which is not adulterated with superstitions and wrong thoughts of ignorant people. Yes, such pure noble guidance should be followed.

Then, it adds:

"...And verily if you follow their desires after the knowledge has come to you, you shall have from Allah neither protector nor helper. "

But, since some of the Jewish and Christian truth-seekers accepted the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S) and embraced Islam, the Holy Qur'an, after scorning the aforementioned group, commemorates this group well by saying:

"Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read, they are the ones that truly believe in it,..."

"...and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall (surely) be the losers."

These people were those who truly read their Divine Book as it ought to be read and followed it accordingly. This manner of striving resulted in their being guided.

Therein, they had studied the glad tidings of the advent of the promised prophet and they found those attributes congruous with Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (S) so thereby they submitted, and Allah, therefore, appreciated them.

Explanation

The phrase / wa la 'initaba'ta 'ahwa'ahum /, 'and verily if you follow their desires', may prompt the readers of the verse to ask this question: Was it possible that Muhammad (S) would, with his inerrant position of prophethood, follow the desires of those misguided Jews?

In answer to this question we say that these statements, which are frequently cited in the verses of the Qur'an, do not contradict with the state of inerrancy of prophets (as), because on one hand, it is a conditional sentence, therefore the mentioning of the protasis does not lean that the action will definitely be performed.

On the other hand, the state of being immune from sin does not refute the capability of committing sin and errs by prophets (as) though prophets and Imams (as) are able to commit sin and their free will is not taken away from them, they would never contaminate themselves with corruption or even taint their souls with a single sin.

In other words, they can commit sins but their belief, knowledge, and virtue is so intense that they never draw near to any sin. Therefore, such admonishments as the above are completely appropriate for them.

Thirdly, this statement, although addressing the holy Prophet (S), may envelop all believers entirely.

Pleasing Enemies has its Limits

It is true that one should attract the enemies' attention towards his invitation with the magnetic power of excellent ethics and superior character, but there are some who never accept the truth. They are not worth worrying about. They will never believe in the true path, hence, endeavouring to attract their attention is a waste of time.

Allah's Guidance is the Only True Guidance

This fact is also understood from the above verses that the only law which can lead man towards salvation and happiness is the law and guidance of *Allah*, because to whatever extent the knowledge of

man progresses, it is still interwoven with ignorance, doubt and deficiency from the points of view of various aspects.

Hence, the guidance which comes forth under the shade of such incomplete knowledge cannot be considered an absolute guidance. The only One Who can provide Absolute Guidance 'is the One Who possesses ' Absolute Knowledge', without any ignorance or imperfection. This Attribute applies only to *Allah*.

How Should the Book be Read?

This meaning is an expressive one which defines a clear path for us regarding the Holy Qur'an, the Divine Book.

Now, those who read the verses of the Qur'an are defined in several groups: One of these groups emphasize on the forms of pronunciation and articulation of the phonemes and morphemes and also the overall intonation of the verses of the Qur'an with their own proper Arabic points of articulation.

They always think of linguistical regulations for the Arabic pronunciation of the signs and sounds, pauses and extensions, and, finally, for observing the special letters in the Qur'an known as /yarmalun/.

They usually are not particularly concerned with the meaning and the content of the verses they read. When they disregard the meaning of the Qur'an, their actions accordingly are obvious. The example of this kind of people is depicted in the Qur'an saying:

"...is as the likeness of the ass bearing books..." (Surah. Al-Jumu'ah No. 61. Verse 5).

The second group is those who, in addition to the verbal utterances, pay close attention to the meanings of the verses and contemplate over the elegancies and exquisite points of the Qur'an.

They try to understand the sciences described therein, but they do not actually comply with its ordinances. The third group is those true believers who accept the Qur'an as a mandate of action and use it as a comprehensive program for their lives.

They consider the recitation of this great Book, contemplation over its meanings, and conception of its purposes as preliminary for their actions.

That is why whenever they recite the Qur'an, a fresh and pleasing state encompasses their souls allowing them to make new decisions with vigorous intention and a strong inner feeling of preparedness for their actions.

This is, perhaps, the privilege granted for reading the Book in the way in which it ought to be read.

A tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (as), commenting on this verse, says: "They recite its verses slowly, and

understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promises, and are afraid of its threats, and take lessons from its stories, and obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths.

They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. *Allah*, the High, has said: (It is) a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses'...", (38: 29), (Irshadul-Qulub, ad-Daylami). [7](#)

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 122-123

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

122. "O' Children of Israel! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel all the nations (of that time)."

123. "And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another, neither shall any ransom be accepted from any one, nor shall intercession profit any one, nor shall they be helped (from outside)."

Once again, in these verses, *Allah* addresses the Children of Israel and reminds them of His favours bestowed on them; particularly that He preferred them to all other nations of their time.

"O' Children of Israel! Call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel all the nations (of that time)."

But, since every blessing is followed by a corresponding responsibility and, therefore, *Allah* gives man a duty or a responsibility to undertake for each bounty which is given him, in the next verse He threatens him by saying:

"And guard yourselves against a day when no one in the least shall avail another..."

"...neither shall any ransom be accepted from anyone..."

"...nor shall intercession profit any one..."

And, if you think that anyone can help others that day, save *Allah*, you are mistaken, because He says:

"...nor shall they be helped (from outside)."

Therefore, none of the means of rescue that they would grope for in this world to save themselves will be available there. There will be only one way open to them which ***is the path of Faith, good action, repentance of sins, and self-improvement.***

These two verses are quite similar to verses 47 and 48 of the current Surah, where we explained the idea of intercession in detail. Here, it is referred to, again, reminding that the warning, i.e. that 'intercession shall not be of any avail', does not at all mean that the intercession by the holy Prophet (S) or any other of his divine allies will also be ineffective on the Day of Judgment.

It is a warning against the disbelievers who, as a figment of their own fanciful imaginations, think that their guardian deities, gods or goddesses will come to their aid, or to those of the Jews and Christians who stubbornly claim the intercession of Moses (as), or that Christ's (as) blood has been paid as a ransom for the sins of his followers.

This verse clearly denies any such ransom for sins or intercession for the sinners who do not believe in the divinely promised Last Apostle of Allah, Muhammad Mustafa (S), and reject faith in the truth which he preached. But, as it was mentioned before, the intercession of the holy Prophet (S) or the other holy ones (as) will be accepted by the leave of *Allah* (s.w.t.).

[1.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Arabic version by Subh-i-salih, p. 274

[2.](#) Tafsir-as-Safi, vol. 1, p. 167

[3.](#) Abul-Futuh Razi, vol. 1, p. 308

[4.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol., p. 197

[5.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 198

[6.](#) Ibid, & Tafsir Abul-Futuh Razi, vol. 1, p. 310

[7.](#) Al-Mizan, vol. 2, p. 70 (English Version)

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