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Section 16: The Forbidden Food - the Vain Excuses

The forbidden foods –the vain excuses of the disbelievers – Allah's wrath can not be averted by the guilty ones.

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 145

قُل لاَّ أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلاَّ أَن يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّهِ بِهِ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلاَ عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

145. ***"Say: 'I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat except it be carrion, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine -for that is indeed abomination or a transgression, slain invoking (the name of) other than Allah, but whoever is forced (to eat it by necessity), not desiring nor transgressing, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful."***

To make the divine prohibitions clear from the innovations that pagans had asserted in the Divine creed, in this verse, the Prophet (S) is commanded to tell people explicitly that there is no forbidden food for anybody, irrespective of men and women, young and old, in what was revealed to him.

The verse says:

"Say: 'I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat ..."

This law lies with some exceptions. The first of them is that it should not be carrion. The verse continues saying:

"…except it be carrion…"

And it should not be the blood that comes out of the animal's body.

".... or blood poured forth…"

This blood is not the blood which remains inside the veins and capillary blood-vessels among its flesh that comes out from the animal's vessels after cutting them and pouring a great deal of blood from them.

The third exception is as follows:

".... or the flesh of swine -for that is indeed abomination...."

All of these abovementioned things are disagreeable in man's nature and are the source of kinds of pollutions that cause some different damages.

Then, The Qur'an points to he fourth kind of these exceptions, and says:

".... or a transgression, slain invoking (the name of) other than Allah...."

From the point of ethical and spiritual views, this action is a sign of being aloof from Allah and from the school of theism both,

Thus, there are assigned two kinds of Islamic conditions for lawful slaughtering of an animal. Some of these conditions, such as cutting the four main blood-vessels of the animal and pouring forth its blood, have the aspect of hygiene, while some others, such as setting the animal toward the direction of the Ka'bah, reciting the holy phrase: 'Bismillah', and it being slaughtered by a Muslim, have spiritual aspects.

At the end of the verse, the Qur'an has made an exception, from the usage of these prohibited meats, those who are forced to eat them by necessity or because of lack of any other food in order to protect their lives, but not for pleasure nor more than the limits nor with the purpose of counting the divine unlawful things as lawful. It says:

".... but whoever is forced (to eat it by necessity), not desiring nor transgressing, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful."

In fact, these two conditions are for the sake that some people do not take this constrained circumstance as excuse for their transgression to the limits of the laws of Allah.

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 146

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُواْ حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفُرٍ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا

إِلاَّ مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوِ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِبَغْيِهِمْ وإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ

146. ***"And to those who were Jews We forbade every (animal) having claws, and of oxen and sheep We forbade unto them the fat of both, save what is upon their backs or the entrails or what is mixed with bones. This (prohibition) We recompensed them for their rebellion, and verily We are truthful."***

The Prohibitions and the Jews

In this verse a part of the prohibitions of the Jews are referred to in order to make it clear that the forged and superstitious ordinances of the pagans were adapted neither with the religion of Islam nor with the creed of the Jews, (nor with the Christian creed which usually follows the creed of the Jews), So, at first, it says:

"And to those who were Jews We forbade every (animal) having claws....."

Therefore, all the animals that have not 'clean hoofs', whether they are cattle or birds, have been forbidden for the Jews. Then, it says:

"...and of oxen and sheep we forbade unto them the fat of both....."

Following this matter, it makes exception three instances from it. At first, it says:

"...save what is upon their backs..."

It continues saying about the fats that are on their sides and inside their bellies.

"...or the entrails..."

And the fats that are mixed with their bones:

"...This (prohibition) We recompensed them for their rebellion...."

Yet, at the end of the verse it announces that the prohibitions were not, in fact, decreed upon the Jews, but because of unjust and transgression they committed, by Allah's commandment, they became deprived from these kinds of meat and fat that they were interested in.

".... This (prohibition) We recompensed them for their rebellion....."

And, as an emphasis, the Qur'an adds that it is a fact.

"....and verily We are truthful."

Surah Al-‘An’am, Verse 147

فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُل رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ وَلاَ يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

147. ***"But if they belie you (O' Muhammad!), then say: 'Your Lord is (full) of mercy all-embracing, but (if they do not repent) His punishment will not be returned from the guilty people."***

Since, the obstinacy of the Jews and pagans was clearly fixed and they might insist and belie the Prophet (S), in this verse Allah commands His Messenger, concerning this matter, as follows:

"But if they belie you (O' Muhammad!), then say: 'Your Lord is (full) of mercy all-embracing....."

This means that such a Lord does not punish you immediately. He gives you respite may be you repent and return from your wrong-doings, in order to come back unto Allah, when you become regretful.

But if you abuse again this divine respite and continue the undue calumnies and accusations that you used to act, do know that Allah’s punishment is certain and, at last, it will befall you, because His punishment is not something that can be removed from the evil-doers. The verse says:

"... but (if they do not repent) His punishment will not be returned from the guilty people."

This verse makes the greatness of the trainings of the Qur'an manifest very clearly. It declares that, after the explanation of all these wrong actions of the Jews and pagans, yet He does not threaten them to punishment at once.

At first, with some affectionate words, He has left the way of return free for them in order that they be encouraged and they return towards the Truth. But in order that the vast mercy of Allah does not cause their daring, boldness and disobedience, and that they may leave their obstinacy, through the last phrase of the verse, the Qur'an threatens them to the certain punishment of Allah.

Surah Al-‘An’am, Verse 148

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُواْ لَوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلاَ آبَاؤُنَا وَلاَ حَرَّمْنَا مِن شَيْءٍ
كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم حَتَّى ذَاقُواْ بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِندَكُم مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ
لَنَا إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَخْرُصُونَ

148. ***"Those who are polytheists will say: 'Had Allah wished we would not have associated (aught***

with Him*) *nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.' So did belie those who were before them until they tasted Our punishment. Say: 'Have you any knowledge with you to adduce for Us? You follow nothing but conjecture, and you are nothing but idle talkers '."

Following the expressions of the pagans, which were referred to through the former verses, now some of their vain reasoning and the answers of them are pointed out in this verse.

At first, it implies that in answer to the Prophet's objections regarding paganism and prohibition of the lawful sustenance, soon the pagans will say that had Allah wished they would neither have become infidels nor would their ancestors have turned to idolatry, nor would they have forbidden anything.

Thus, they claim that whatever they have done and they have said is entirely referred to the Will of Allah. The verse says:

"Those who are polytheists will say: 'Had Allah wished we would not have associated* (*aught with Him*) *nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.' ..."

Similar to many other evil-doers, pagans wanted to flee from the responsibilities of their wrong actions with the cover and under the title of determinism. In fact, they claimed that Allah's silence, concerning idolatry and prohibition of some animals, was as a reason for His pleasure, since if He had not been pleased with those things He should have somehow prevented them from those things.

But, the Qur'an has decisively discussed answering them. At first, it says that they are not alone who have forged such lies against Allah, but there were also some groups of people in the past who told the same lies, and, finally, they confronted with results of their wrong actions and tasted the punishment of Allah. The verse says:

"... So did belie those who were before them until they tasted our punishment.... "

Through their own statements, in fact, they both told lies, and belied the prophets. If Allah was pleased with those deeds, how did He send messengers to invite them to unity? Principally, the invitation of prophets is itself the most important proof upon the freedom of man's will and choice.

Then the Qur'an inquires that if you have any reason for your claim, why do you not bring if forth? It adds:

"... Say: Have you any knowledge with you to adduce for Us? ..."

And, finally, the verse implies that you have certainly no proof for your claim, and you follow merely your conjectures and your bare imaginations. It says:

"...You follow nothing but conjecture, and you are nothing but idle talkers'."

Surah Al-‘An’am, Verse 149

قُلْ فَلِلّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاء لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

149. ***"Say: 'Then to Allah (alone) belongs the conclusive argument. Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all aright'."***

In order to nullify the pagan's claim, the Qur'an mentions another proof. It implies that Allah has brought forth some clear and correct proofs upon the subject of His Unity as well as the ordinances of lawful and unlawful things.

They have been introduced by the means of both the prophets of Allah, and through the way of intellect, so that there remains no excuse for anyone. It says:

"Say: ' Then to Allah (alone) belongs the conclusive argument....."

Therefore, they can never claim that Allah has approved their undue deeds and beliefs by His silence. They also can not claim that they are forced in doing their deeds, because if they were forced, bringing forth those proofs, sending prophets, and their preaching and invitations would entirely be in vain. Then, bringing forth those proofs is itself an evidence for the existence of free will in man.

And, at the end of the verse, it says:

"... Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all aright'."

But, if such a thing happened, neither that kind of belief could be worthy, nor the deeds which are performed under its shade. The virtue and development of man is in this fact that he accomplishes paving the path of guidance and felicity by himself and through his own free will.

It has been narrated from Imam Kazim (as) who said:

"*Allah has two proofs upon people: the outward proof and the inward proof. The outward proof contains of prophets, messengers, and Imamaculate Imams; and the inward proof consists of intellects (and thoughts)."*1

Surah Al-‘An’am, Verse 150

قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَدَاءكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ حَرَّمَ هَـذَا فَإِن شَهِدُواْ فَلاَ تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاء الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ وَهُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ

150. ***"Say: 'Bring your witnesses who bear witness that Allah has forbidden this.' So if they bear witness, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who deny Our Signs, and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and they hold*** (***others***) ***equal with their Lord. "***

In this verse, in order to make the falsity of their claims more clear, and also that the proper principals of judgment be observed, the Qur'an invites them to bring their reputable witnesses, if they have any, proving that Allah has forbidden those animals and filths that they claim are prohibited. So, addressing the Messenger of Allah (S), the holy verse says:

"Say: 'Bring your witnesses who bear witness that Allah has forbidden this.' ..."

After that, it adds the words to imply that if they cannot find any reputable witnesses, whom they certainly may not find, and they suffice only to their own testimony Prophet (S) should never follow them to testify what they claim.

The verse says:

"... So if they bear witness, do not testify with them....."

The contexts indicate that these false ordinances of theirs have originated from some low desires and blindly imitations, because they have no evidence and proof neither from the divine prophets nor from the heavenly Books upon the prohibition of these things.

That is why, in the continuation of the verse, it says:

"... and do not follow the desires of those who deny Our Signs, and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and they hold (***others***) ***equal with their Lord."***

That is, idolatry, denial of the Hereafter and Resurrection, superstitions, and their sensualities are some alive witnesses that these ordinances of theirs are also artificial, and their claim about prohibition of these things from the side of Allah is groundless and worthless.

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1. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, P. 776

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