

Home > An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an vol. 6 > Section 4: Allah's Help at Hunayn > Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 29 > What is Jizyah?

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 25

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ
شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُدْبِرِينَ

25. “Certainly Allah has helped you on many fields, and on the day of Hunayn, when your multitude made you vain, but it availed you nothing and the earth, in spite of its breadth, became strait to you; then you turned back in retreat.”

In the previous holy verses, the words were upon the encouragement to Holy Struggle and some warnings due to dependences. Here, the verse recounts a few helps and graces of Allah in order to strengthen the motive of Holy Struggle in Muslims.

As Tafsir Marḡiqi, a commentary upon the Qur'ān, says, the total battles of the Prophet (S) were numbered 80.

“Certainly Allah has helped you on many fields...”

It has been narrated that once Mutuwakkil-i-‘Abbāsī became sick. He vowed he would remit many silver coins (derham) if he healed. After that, when he gained his health, it was discussed how many coins the amount of ‘many silver coins’ was. They asked the question from Imam Hādī (as) and, relying upon this verse, he said:

“He must remit eighty derhams (silver coins).”¹

The Feature of the Battle of Hunayn

The Battle of Hunayn happened between the Muslims and a tribe named ‘Hawḡzin’ in a land near Tā’if. That was why that this battle was also called ‘the Battle of Hawḡzin’.

The people of that locality had planned to attack the Muslims, but to stand against that plot, the Prophet

(S) set out the troops of Islam containing two thousand fresh Muslims added to those ten thousand strivers who had formerly conquered Mecca, towards them in 8 A.H.

It was after morning prayer when the Muslims were attacked unawares by the fighters of Hawāzin. Therefore, most of the Muslim strivers run away and the regularity of the army of Islam disturbed.

The verse says:

“...then you turned back in retreat.”

But a group of them resisted very hard and finally, by the Prophet's call, the fugitives returned and, together with them, their attack began again. Then, by the help of Allah, one hundred pagans were killed and the rest of them surrendered. At last, the Battle of Hunayn ended in favour of the Muslims and they gained a great deal of booties.

“...on the day of Hunayn...”

Concerning to the Battle of Hunayn, there are many things to be said upon the number of captives, the quantity of booties and the quality of their division, the happenings that occurred there, and the consequences of this battle, which can be studied in the related history books and the books compiled about the Battles of Islam.

Thus, sometimes the abundance of persons and material possibilities cause proud and negligence in men, while in all conditions, whether in weakness or strength, the need to the helps of Allah exists. In the Battle of Badr, the Muslims were small in number but they enjoyed the help of Allah.

But, at the beginning of the Battle of Hunayn, where the Muslims were large in number, they defeated and it was after that event when the help of Allah came to them and they, finally, won the battle.

“Certainly Allah has helped you on many fields, and on the day of Hunayn, when your multitude made you vain but it availed you nothing and the earth, in spite of its breadth, became strait to you; then you turned back in retreat.”

This fact should be noticed, too, that without the Will of Allah, the material means are ineffective, (***“...it availed you nothing...”***), and restructures them spiritually.

“...then you turned back in retreat.”

“Then Allah sent down His tranquility...”

Surah At-Tawbah – Verses 26–27

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

26. “Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down hosts which you did not see, and He punished those who disbelieved, and that is the reward of the infidels.”

27. “Then, after that (escape), Allah turns towards whomever He pleases, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

The Arabic word /sakinah/ (tranquillity) has been applied in six occurrences of the Qur’ān, five of which relate to battles.

In the Battle of Hunayn, there came four kinds of Divine grace upon the believers from the side of Allah. They were: tranquility, unseen troops, divine violence against pagans, and accepting the repentance of the fugitives (which is mentioned in the following verse).

Some of the pagan captives asked the Muslims:

“Where are those white clothed troops who killed a number of us?”

This meaning points to the angels who appeared in white clothing, in the eyes of the pagans.²

However, the unseen helps were the secret of the Muslims’ victory. And, in addition to that, generally, a good spirituality, and having the confidence which is emerged from Faith, are among the main factors of triumph in battles.

Tranquillity and confidence are necessary both for the leader and for the followers. The verse says:

“Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers...”

The belief in the presence of the angels and the Divine missions for helping the believers in that battle, is a Qur’ānic belief. And, no doubt, for the person who believes in ‘origin and end,’ being killed in the way of Allah (s.w.t.) is an honour, but for disbelievers it is a torment. The holy verse continues saying.

“...And sent down hosts which you did not see, and He punished those who disbelieved, and that is the reward of the infidels.”

Upon the commentary of verse 27, it can be said that the gates of repentance are always open to all

persons, even for fugitives and captives. In this course, those sinners will be involved in the forgiveness of Allah who truly feel sorry. It is in this case that Allah not only covers their sins but also loves them. The verse says:

“Then, after that (escape), Allah turns towards whomever He pleases, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

By the way, it should be noticed that the acceptance of repentance is not obligatory for Allah, but it is an excellence which relates to His Own Wisdom.

Explanations

There are some probabilities expressed upon the meaning of the repentance which is mentioned in the verse. They are as follows:

1. Repenting from the sin of escaping from battle-field.
2. Repenting from idolatry.
3. Repenting from pride, and from reliance on the immensity of persons.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 28

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

28. “O’ you who have Faith! The polytheists are indeed unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year, and if you fear poverty, then Allah will enrich you out of His grace if He pleases; verily Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

One of the four commandments that Ali (as) conveyed to the people of Mecca in the rites of Hajj (pilgrimage) in the ninth year A.H. was that from the year followed no pagan was allowed to enter the Holy Mosque and to circumambulate the Ka’bah. This verse has pointed to this matter and its philosophy. It says:

“O’ you who have Faith! The polytheists are indeed unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year...”

Then, in response to those shortsighted persons who said with the absence of pagans in the Sacred Mosque their business and trading would decline and they would become poor and miserable, the

Qur'ān says:

“...and if you fear poverty, then Allah will enrich you out of His grace if He pleases...”

And He did enrich them in the best form and, at the age of the Prophet (S) with the spread of Islam, the crowds of pilgrims to the Sacred Mosque started to come toward Mecca, and this circumstance has been being continued up to the present time.

Consequently, Mecca, which was located in a place surrounded by some dry mountains, has been changed into a very much inhabited city and an important center of bargains and tradings.

Finally, at the end of the verse, the Qur'ān adds that Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise; and whatever instruction He commands is according to His Wisdom, and He is perfectly aware of its results. The verse says:

“...verily Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 29

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا
يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ
صَاغِرُونَ

29. “Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor do they prohibit, what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of Truth, out of those who have been given the Book until they pay the (Jizyah) tributary tax with their hand and they remain subjected.”

The words in the former verses were about the duty of the Muslims before idolaters. This verse, and several verses next to it, make manifest the Muslims’ duty before ‘the People of the Book’.

In these verses, in fact, Islam has assigned a series of moderate ordinances to be followed by both the Muslims and disbelievers. From the point of following a heavenly religion, ‘the People of the Book’ are resembled to Muslims, but from another point of view, they are resembled to pagans.

For this very reason, Islam does not permit that they should be killed, while it issued this permission about the idolaters who insisted on their belief, because the program of Islam has been to root out idolatry from the whole earth.

Islam lets Muslims come to terms with the People of the Book in the case that they agree to have a

peaceful life beside Muslims in the form of a safe minority religion, to respect Islam without committing any oppositions and any evil propagation against Muslims and Islam.

One of other signs of their accepting this peaceful life is that they agree to pay Jizyah (capitation tax), which is a kind of poll-tax, and they deliver it to Islamic Government every year.

Otherwise, Islam issues the command of struggling and fighting against them. The reason of this violence is made manifest through three phrases in the verse under discussion.

At first, it says:

“Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day...”

How can it be that the People of the Book, such as the Jews and the Christians, do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, while outwardly we see that they believe in God and the Resurrection both. This is for the sake that their belief is mixed with a great deal of superstitions and so many groundless matters.

Then, the verse points to their second weakness, indicating that they do not accept the prohibitions of Allah. They are polluted with: drinking wines, usury, consuming the flesh of swine, and committing a lot of acts of sexual libertinages. The verse says:

“...nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited...”

Finally, the verse refers to their third fault, when it says:

“...nor follow the religion of Truth...”

That is, their religions have been deviated from their essential ways, many of the facts have been forgotten and a mass of superstitions have been substituted in their places.

After mentioning these three qualities, which are, in fact, considered as the permission of fighting against them, the verse continues saying:

“...out of those who have been given the Book...”

Then, the Qur’ān, in a single sentence, states the difference between idolaters and pagans. It says:

“...until they pay the (Jizyah) tributary tax with their hand and they remain subjected.”

What is Jizyah?

It is a kind of Islamic poll-tax which is upon persons, not upon properties and lands. In other words, Jizyah is a yearly poll-tax.

The main philosophy of this tax is that the defence for integrity, independence, and security of a country is

the duty of all members of that country.

Therefore, if a group of people in such a society practically undertake and fulfil that duty, while some others, because of being busy in their own occupations, can not take part in the rows of soldiers, the duty of the second group is that they pay the expenses of the strivers and protectors of the security in the form of a poll-tax every year.

Thus, a poll-tax is simply a kind of financial support which is paid by the People of the Book instead of the responsibility that Muslims undertake with the purpose of supplying security for their lives and properties.

1. Atyab-ul-Bayḥān
2. At-Tafsir-us-Sūfi

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-6/section-4-allahs-help-hunayn>