

Section 7: The Sincere Seekers Shall Be Guided Aright

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verse 64

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

64. “And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play and verily the abode of the hereafter, is certainly the (real) life: did they but know!”

The Qur'anic word *lahw* is used for the amusements which hinder man from the main aims and fundamental affairs. The Arabic term *la'ib* is doing something like play in which there is no particular aim.¹

The creation of the world has been done wisely and for a particular aim, while being mammonist and neglectful from the Hereafter is done foolishly.

In order that men can promote their thought higher than the horizon of this limited life, and that they open the doors of some vaster worlds to the scope of the vision of their intellect, in this verse the Holy Qur'an, through a short and very expressive sentence, compares the life of the present world with the eternal life in another world, where it says:

“And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play...”

There is not anything in this world save sport and play, while the life in another world is the real life. The above verse continues:

“...and verily the abode of the hereafter, is certainly the (real) life: did they but know!”

What an interesting and expressive meaning this Qur’anic phrase */la hiyal hayawan/* is! Because the Arabic word */lahw/* means ‘sport’ and anything that makes man busy to it and turns him away from the essential affairs of life, while the word */la’ib/* (a play) is used for the acts that have a kind of imaginary order for an imaginary aim, (play).

In a ‘play’ someone plays as a king and another one as a minister, another one is the commander of the army, and some others play as a caravan or as a thief. But after their struggles and conflicts, we see that all of their deeds have been some imaginary acts.

The Qur’an implies that the life of this world is a kind of sport and play. In it, there are some people who pursue some imaginary things. After a few days they scatter and their bodies will be buried under the ground, and, then everything will be forgotten.

But the real life, which has no declension or destruction, will remain. There is neither pain, nor toleration, nor distress, nor fear, nor any trouble in the life of hereafter, but it is with the condition that man knows it and studies it carefully.

Those who love the life of this world and became happy and beguiled by its dazzling glare are like some children, though they have lived a long life.

However, it must be noted that, as some commentators and philologists believe, the Qur’anic word */haywan/* means ‘life’, It points to this fact that ‘the abode of hereafter’ is the abode of real life, as if life gushed from all of it and there were nothing in it but ‘life’.

It is evident that never the Qur’an intends to negate the Divine merits of this world by this meaning, but it intends to illustrate the value of this life comparing with that life by an explicit and clear comparison.

Moreover, it wants to warn man that he must not be as captive for these merits; he must be a commander upon them, and he must never exchange the noble values of his own self for them.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 65

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

65. “So when they ride in the ships, they call upon Allah sincerely vowing worship (only) unto Him, and when He brings them safe to the land, they associate others (with Him),”

Being in awe of Allah removes the dusts of negligence, and awakens the nature of seeking–Allah in man.

This verse refers to the nature and fate of man and it pays to the manifestation of the Light of Unity inside the selves of men at the most severe states, and, through a very expressive example, it says:

“So when they ride in the ships, they call upon Allah sincerely vowing worship (only) unto Him, and when He brings them safe to the land, they associate others (with Him),”

Yes, the difficulties and calamities are the preparations for the growth of man’s nature. The Light of Unity is hidden inside the spirit of all human beings.

Superstitious customs, wrong educations, and evil indoctrinations cast some curtains over it, but at the time of attack of calamities from every side and when the pile of difficulties appear in front of man and he sees he cannot apparently do anything, he involuntarily goes toward the world of super nature and he wipes out any polytheistic thought from his heart and, in the furnace of these events, he becomes pure and free from any impurity.

Shortly speaking, there is always a luminous point inside the man’s heart which is the nearest mean of his communication with the world of super nature and the shortest path toward Allah.

Wrong teachings, negligence, and pride, specially at the time of health and affluence, draw some curtains over it, but the mass of calamities and terrible events tear these curtains, put the ashes away from it and that luminous point inside the man’s heart appears.

It was for this very reason that the great leaders of Islam used to guide those who were seriously doubtful in the subject of theology by this way.

We have heard the story of the wandering man who was in doubt for the subject of theology and Imam Sadiq (as) guided him aright through this very natural and innate way.

The man said:

“O son of the Messenger of Allah (S)! (Please) guide me to Allah that who He is, because the tempters have made me bewildered.”

Then the Imam told him:

“O’ servant of Allah! Have you ever embarked a ship?”

The man answered he had.

Then Imam said:

“Has it happened that your ship was broken where there was no other ship to save you and you did not know how to swim?”

The man answered:

“Yes.”

He said:

“In that state, did your heart tend to this matter that there is something that can save you from that affliction?”

He answered:

“Yes.”

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“This thing is Allah Who is able to save (anyone) where there is no deliverer and succours and where there is no helper.”²

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 66

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ

66. “(Thus) let them be ungrateful for what We have given them and let them enjoy, but they shall soon know.”

Polytheism is a kind of ungratefulness and ingratitude unto the favours of Allah.

We must not be happy with those successes which are accompanied with blasphemy and ungratefulness, because they usually have an evil end.

After mentioning so many reasoning upon Monotheism and theology, this verse confronts the opponents with a sharp and serious threat when it says:

“(Thus) let them be ungrateful for what We have given them and let them enjoy, but they shall soon know.”

They will enjoy of the fleeting pleasures, but they shall know very soon what the end of their disbelief and polytheism will be, and what an evil fate they will have.

It is true that the appearance of the verse here seems to be a command to disbelief and denial of the Divine verses, but it is evident that its purpose is a warning.

It is just like that we tell a criminal person:

“Perform whatever crime you can, but soon you will taste the bitter fruit of your deeds in a lump.”

In such sentences where the form of the verb is imperative the main aim is a threat against the opposite party, not a state of imperative nature.

It is interesting that here the Qur’anic sentence *ifasaufa ta’lamun/ (they shall soon know)* has been stated in an absolute form.

It does not say what they know, but it simply says:

“They shall soon know”.

This vastness in meaning is for the sake that the mind of hearers might not be limited in its concept. The fruit of bad deeds is the divine punishment, disgrace in both worlds, and all kinds of other miseries.

At the end you may note these two verses:

“And whatever of favour is (bestowed) on you, it is from Allah; then whenever any calamity afflicts upon you, unto Him you cry (for assistance).”

“Then when He removes the affliction from you, behold! A group of you associate others with their Lord.”³

This very meaning is mentioned in Surah Yunus in another form.

It says:

“And when an affliction touches a man, he calls Us (while reclining), on his side, or sitting, or standing, but when We remove from him his affliction, he passes on, as if he never called Us to an affliction that touched him...”⁴

The above meaning has also been stated in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 33, Surah Az-Zumar, verse 49, and Surah ‘Asra’, verses 67–69 in some other phrases and with some comprehensive words.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 67

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا وَيَتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ
وَبِالْغَيْبِ يَكْفُرُونَ

67. “Have they not seen that We have appointed a sanctuary secure, while the people are snatched away from all around them? Will they still believe in the falsehood and disbelieve in bounty of Allah?”

One of the ways of inviting people to Allah is attracting their attention unto the divine bounties.

This verse says:

“Have they not seen that We have appointed a sanctuary secure, while the people are snatched away from all around them?...”

Arabs were in insecurity then, but in spite of that insecure environment, He caused Mecca to be a sanctuary secure, then how can He not protect them against their enemies? And their enemies were afraid of these weak people before Allah, the Great, the Mighty.

The verse continues saying:

“...Will they still believe in the falsehood and disbelieve in bounty of Allah?”

Shortly speaking, the Lord Who is able to cause a small piece of land to be secure inside a vast area of the earth where a group of half wild people used to live, how can He not protect the faithful people amongst some pagans and unbelievers?

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 68

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ
مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ

68. “And who is more unjust than one who forges a lie against Allah, or belies the truth when it has come to him? Is there not a home in Hell for the disbelievers?”

The Divine revelation should be accepted completely and without decreasing anything from it. Adding anything to the religion is invention and false allegation, and it is the worse injustice.

Therefore, in this verse the Qur’an says:

“And who is more unjust than one who forges a lie against Allah, or belies the truth when it has come to him?...”

Allah has delivered many clear evidences which prove that there is nothing to be worthy of being worshipped save Allah, but polytheists forge some lies to Him and associate some partners with Him,

too. They even claim that this is a divine program!

On the other hand, Allah sent down the Qur'an for them, in which the signs of Truth are clear, but they ignored them and put them at their back. Can any injustice and oppression be considered more superior than this? It is certainly injustice against their own selves and against all humankind, because polytheism and disbelief is a great injustice.

In other word, is injustice, in its vast scope of meaning, anything save deviation and bringing something out of its proper place? Is there anything worse than this that one puts some pieces of worthless stone and wood in a row with the Creator of the heavens and the earth?

Moreover, polytheism is the source of all social corruptions, and in fact other kinds of injustice originate from it. Sensualism, mammonism, and worshipping ranks, each one is a kind of polytheism.

But do know that an evil fate is waiting for the polytheists.

The Qur'an questions:

"...Is there not a home in Hell for the disbelievers?"

It is noteworthy that in fifteen occurrences of the Qur'an some people have been introduced as 'the most unjust ones', and in all of these occurrences the Qur'anic sentence is a positive interrogation with a negative sense and it begins with */man 'azlama/*.

A careful study upon these verses shows that all of them return to polytheism, though there are apparently some different matters mentioned in them. Therefore, it can be said that there is not any contradiction in them.⁵

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verse 69

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

69. "And those who strive hard for Us, We will certainly guide them in Our ways, and verily Allah is with the good-doers."

In order to reach the special guidance of Allah, effort and endeavour is necessary, and it is the man who must take the first step.

Sometimes, a step and a sincere struggle consequences both the Divine guidance and eternal salvation.

This holy verse, which is, in fact, the last verse of Surah Al-'Ankabut, points to an important fact, which

is the epitome of the whole Surah and is consistent with its beginning.

It implies that though there are many difficulties for those who pave the path of Allah, the Almighty, the difficulty from the point of recognizing the truth, the difficulty of temptations of the Satans of man and Jinn; the difficulty of facing with the opposition of the obstinate and cruel enemies; and the difficulty of probable mistakes.

Here, there is one true thing which strengthens you, supports you, and gives you power and certainty for these difficulties, as follows:

“And those who strive hard for Us, We will certainly guide them in Our ways, and verily Allah is with the good-doers.”

Upon the purpose of struggle here, the commentators have delivered numerous probabilities. Is it the struggle against enemies? Is it the struggle against carnal soul? Or is it the struggle in the path of knowing Allah by a scientific and logical way?

They have also discussed about the objective meaning of the Arabic term */final/ (in Us)*, applied in this verse, whether it means in the way of Allah’s pleasure, or in the way of struggle against carnal soul, or in the path of worship, or in the path of struggle against enemy.

But it makes manifest that the application of both */jihad/* which has a vast and absolute meaning, and */final/* are correct.

Therefore, it envelops any kind of struggle and effort which is performed in the way of Allah and for Him and with the purpose of gaining the divine aims, whether they are in the way of obtaining knowledge, or struggle against carnal soul, or struggle against enemy, or showing patience in obedience, or having patience against temptation of committing sin, or in the way of helping the weak persons, or doing any other good action.

Those who strive in these ways for Allah, in any form and any manner, will be involved in the support and guidance of Allah.

By the way, through what was said, it became clear that the purpose of the Arabic word */subull/ (ways)*, used here, is different ways which are led to Allah: the way of struggle against carnal soul, the way of struggling against enemies, and the way of learning knowledge and culture. In short, struggle in any one of these ways causes one to be led to a path which ends to Allah.

This is the promise that Allah has strictly and emphatically given to all of the strivers in His way, and He has strengthened it by kinds of emphasis, and has considered success, progress, and triumph in the pledge of two important things: ‘Struggle’ and ‘sincerity of intention’.

Thus, man must strive in this way, but guidance is with Allah; and that a tradition indicates that

knowledge is a light that Allah casts in the heart of any one whom He desires and knows eligible for it, may also refer to this very meaning.

Note to the Following Points

1– It is understood from the abovementioned verse that any kind of failure and dissatisfaction we are confronted is the effect of one of these two things: we have neglected the struggle, or there has not been enough sincerity in our action. If these two exist with together, according to the promise of Allah, victory and guidance will surely come forth.

And if we contemplate well, we can find out the origin of difficulties, and the afflictions of the Islamic societies in this very fact. Why the Muslims, who once were an advanced nation in the world, are backward and retarded today?

Why do they beg nearly all their needs, even for their own culture and laws, from foreigners? Why must they rely on others for protecting themselves against political storms and martial attacks? Why one day others were in need of the bounty of knowledge and rich culture of Muslims, but today these people have to sit at the table of other nations?

And, finally, why are they captured in the hand of others and their lands are occupied by the transgressors?

All these questions have only one answer, and it is that either they have neglected the holy struggle, or their intentions have become polluted.

Yes, struggle in the fields of science, culture, politics, and army has been neglected and love of self, mammonism, love of comfort, short sightedness, and private motives have overcome them so much that the number of those killed by their own forces is larger than the number of those killed by their enemy.

The despair of some persons affected by the West or the East, the treachery of a group of rulers and chiefs, and the hopelessness and the reclusion of some knowledgeable men and the possessors of reflection have taken from them both struggle and sincerity.

Whenever a little sincerity appears in us and strivers come in the scene, victories appear one after another, and the chains of captivity will be broken.

Then, despairs change into hope and failures into success; disgrace changes into honour and eminence, and dispersion and hypocrisy changes into unity and flowing. Thus, how great and inspirational the Qur'an is that has stated both the pain and its remedy in a short sentence.

Yes, those who struggle in the path of Allah are included in the guidance of Allah, the Almighty, and it is evident that wherever His guidance exists, aberration and failure does not have any place.

Some narrations of Ahlul Bayt (as) have rendered this verse into the Prophet's progeny (as) and his followers. It is the statement of a complete extension of it, because they were always pioneers and leaders in the way of struggle and sincerity, and it is not an evidence upon the limitation of the concept of the verse at all.

However, every one clearly feels this Qur'anic fact in his effort and endeavour that when he strives in the path of Allah, the doors will be opened to him, difficulties become easy, and hardships will be tolerable.

2- People are divided into three groups: A group of people are some obstinate deniers for whom no guidance is useful. The second group are some sincere strivers who reach the Truth. The third group are more excellent than the second group. They are not far from the truth that must become near, and are not separate from Him that must join Him, because they are always with Him.

The previous verse, saying:

“And who is more unjust than one who forges a lie...”

is about the first group.

The Qur'anic sentence:

“And those who strive hard for Us...”

is about the second group.

And the Qur'anic phrase:

“...verily Allah is with the good-doers”

is about the third group.

By the way, this phrase makes it clear that the rank of good-doers is higher than that of strivers, because besides striving in the path of their own deliverance, they have the characteristic of donation and kindness and they strive for others, too.

O Allah! Give us such a success that in our whole lifetime we do not stop effort and striving in Your way!

O Allah! Bestow us such a sincerity that we do not think about anything but You and we do not take any step save for You!

O Allah! Take us higher than the rank of strivers and endow on us the rank of kindness and donation of the good-doers, and appoint us under the cover of Your guidance in our whole lifetime!

Amen, O the Lord of the Worlds!

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1. Mufradat by Raqib
 2. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 3 (New edition), P. 41
 3. Surah An-Nahl, No. 16, verses 53 and 54
 4. Surah Yunus, No. 10, verse 12
 5. Some other explanations are mentioned in the commentary of Surah Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 21

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