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Section 8: Leaning to injustice and evil to be avoided

Jews preferring the idolaters to Muslims –Abraham's seed blessed –Recompense for disbelief and faith – Obedience to Allah, the Apostle Muhammad and those vested with the authority.

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 51

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ وَيَقُولُونَ
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَبِيلًا

51. "Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in Jibt (idol) and Taghut (false deities) and they say about the infidels: 'These are better guided on the way than those who have believed (in Islam)'."

After that the fight of 'Uhud ended, a group of the Jews went to Mecca in order that they ally with the pagans there against the Muslims. Having the aim to please and assure the pagans the Jews prostrated before the pagans' idols. They said that their idolatry was better than the faith of Muslims in Islam and Muhammad (S).

"Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in Jibt (idol) and Taghut (false deities) and they say about the infidels: 'These are better guided on the way than those who have believed (in Islam)'."

The Arabic term 'Jibt', which is applied for the idol of magician, has occurred only once in the Qur'an; while the term Taghut, which is derived from the sense of 'disobedience', has occurred eight times therein.

Perhaps, the objective meaning of these two terms mentioned in the verse is the very two idols before which the Jews prostrated. Or, may be, the purpose of 'Jibt' is the idol, but the purpose of 'Taghut' is the idol worshippers and the advocates of idolatry.

Explanations

1. The enemies of Islam, in order to work against Muslims, sometimes ignore their own conviction. (The Jews prostrated before idols for the pleasure of the pagans against the Muslims.)
2. The mood of obstinacy and enmity changes the way of judgement, and causes the truth to be concealed.

"... they say about the infidels: 'These are better guided...'"

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 52

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا

52. "These are they whom Allah has cursed, and whomever Allah curses, then you will not find any helper for him."

The inauspicious alliances of the opponents of the truth will never gain their expected results, (As it was seen in the alliance of the parties of infidels, Idolaters, and the Jews due to the plotting against Islam when the Jews went into Mecca and prostrated before idols, and when they judged unjustly and allied against Islam. They gained, then, nothing through opposing the Will of *Allah*.)

"...then you will not find any helper for him."

However, whoever is cursed by *Allah*, will always be wretched.

"These are they whom Allah has cursed, and whomever Allah curses, then you will not find any helper for him."

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 53

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا

53. "Or have they a share in the kingdom? Then in that case, they do not give even a speck to

anybody!"

By the commentaries of the previous couple of verses, it was said that the Jews, to attract the attention of the idol-worshippers of Mecca, testified that the idolatry of the Quraysh was better than the theistic practice of the Muslims.

Even they themselves fell prostration before the idols. In this verse, as well as the next one, this fact has been pointed out that their judgement was worthless and invalid. Each of these two verses contains a considerable proof.

In this verse the Qur'an inquires whether the Jews had any share in the government that they let themselves judge like that. And, yet, if they had such an authority, they would not give people any right when they might keep everything for themselves exclusively.

"Or have they a share in the kingdom? Then in that case, they do not give even a speck to anybody! "

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 54

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا

54. "Or, do they (the Jews) envy people for that which Allah has given them of His grace? But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book, and the Wisdom and We have given them a grand kingdom."

In the former verses, the words were about the niggardliness of the Jews, and here, in this verse, their envy is dealt with. Envy, of course, is worse than niggardliness, because a miser simply does not remit his own property, but an envious person is inconvenient of the favour of another person, either.

The word /an-nas/ 'people', mentioned in this verse, as Tafsir-us-Safi indicates, refers to the Prophet (S) and his progeny. 1

Thus, the verse says that the Jews envied them for that which Allah had given them out of His Grace. Then, through such judgements, they wished to quench the fire of their envy.

"Or, do they (the Jews) envy people for that which Allah has given them of His grace. ..."

Then the Qur'an says: why do you wonder and envy that the Prophet of Islam (S), chosen from the family of Bani-Hashim, has been given such a rank? It is in the case that Allah has also given the

progeny of Abraham (from whose family are the Jews) the Book and the wisdom and He has bestowed the prophets of the Children of Israel the authority of a great kingdom.

"... But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book and the Wisdom and We have given them a grand kingdom."

But, unfortunately you, the degenerate people, lost those worthy spiritual and physical capitals because of your own wickedness and hard-heartedness.

A tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) denotes that he (as) was asked about this verse and he (as) answered:

"We are those whom have been jealous of by, the enemies ..."

The physical and spiritual damages of envy, irrespective of personal and social ones, are extraordinarily abundant. They have been mentioned in the traditions of the leaders of Islam. Including them, it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) who said:

"Envy and malevolence are from the darkness of the heart and blind heartedness, which in turn originate from the denial of the bounties of Allah upon human beings. These two, (blind-heartedness and denial of the bounties of Allah) are two wings of disbelief which causes the annihilation of man."

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 55

فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا

55. "So, of them were (some) who believed in it and of them were (some) who barred from it, and sufficient (to punish them) is the Blazing Fire (of Hell)."

This verse is both a soothing for the Prophet (S) and a solace for the Muslims, so that they would not be tired and despaired of the faithlessness of people. In the length of history, the circumstances have always been such, and all the prophets had been faced with the unfaithfulness of some groups of people.

"So, of them were (some) who believed in it, and of them were (some) who barred from it, and sufficient (to punish them) is the Blazing Fire (of Hell)."

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 56

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا
غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

56. "Verily those who disbelieved in Our Signs, soon We will cast them into Fire so oft as their skins shall be burnt We will change them for other skins, that they may taste the torment. Surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise."

Since the infidels were constantly obstinate, they should be retributed constantly with their new skins.

Once, Ibn-i-Abil-'Uja', who was one of the opponents of the religion, asked Imam Sadiq (as) what the fault of the new skin was.

Imam (as) said: "The new skin is from the remaining of the burnt of the very first skin. It is like a sun-dried brick which breaks into pieces and will be made of it mud and a new sun-dried brick again."

Explanations

1. The punishment of the disbelievers is permanent.

"... We will change them for other skins ..."

2. The punishment, because of its continuation, will never become ordinary for the disbelievers.

3. The new skin is for tasting a severe chastisement; (since, in burning, the utmost pain is felt in the skin, and when the fire reaches the bone its pain seems less than before).

4. The Resurrection will be bodily, because the punishment will be upon the skin and the change that it will have. .

"Verily those who disbelieved in Our Signs, soon We will cast them into Fire so oft as their skins shall be burnt We will change them for other skins, that they may taste the torment. Surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise."

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 57

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا

57. "And (as for) those who believe and do good deeds, We will admit them into gardens beneath

which rivers flow –therein shall they abide forever; for them are pure companions – and We will make them enter a dense shade."

In this verse, the holy Qur'an promises those believers who have a good Faith and do good deeds that surely they will live soon in gardens of Heaven, where under its trees some rivers flow. Their life therein will be forever.

Besides that, in Paradise, they will have the pure spouses who will be the source of calmness and tranquillity for both their bodies and souls. They will be pure from the point of menstruation blood, all meanness, and pollutions. They will live under some eternal shades that, unlike to the inconstant shades of this world, are permanent, wherein neither hot wind nor bitter cold enters.

"And (as for) those who believe and do good deeds, We will admit them into gardens beneath which rivers flow –therein they will abide forever; for them are pure companions – and We will make them enter a dense shade."

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 58

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

58. "Verily Allah commands you that you restore deposits to their owners, and when you judge between people, you judge with justice; verily good is the admonition Allah gives you; verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing."

Occasion of Revelation

This verse was revealed at the time when the holy Prophet (S), being completely victorious, arrived in Mecca. The Messenger of Allah (S) called for 'Uthman–ibn– Talhah, the key holder of the Ka'bah, and took the key from him in order to clear out the Ka'bah from the existence of the idols.

After the fulfilment of that aim, 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, asked the Prophet (S) to give the key of the Ka'bah to him.

The rank of key–holding of the Sacred–House, in fact, was a distinguished and honourable rank among Arabs. But, contrary to that, after clearing out the Ka'bah from the filth of the existence of the idols, the Prophet (S) closed the door of the House and delivered the key to 'Uthman–ibn– Talhah while he (S) was reciting the verse under discussion.

Deposit and Justice in Islam

This holy verse, from which a general and common ordinance is understood, explicitly says:

"Verily Allah commands you that you restore deposits to their owners ..."

In the second part of the verse, it points to another important subject. It is the proposition of observing justice in government. The verse, conveying the command of Allah, says:

"... and when you judge between people, you judge with justice; ..."

Then, to lay emphasis on these two commands, it says:

"... verily good is the admonition Allah gives you; ..."

Again, the verse emphasizes and says that Allah is watching you in any state you are, and He both hears your words and sees what you do. It says:

"... verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing."

It is evident that the term 'deposit' has a vast meaning. It includes any physical and spiritual capitals. Therefore, according to the clear meaning of this verse, every Muslim is enjoined not to be treacherous in any deposit and unto any person, whether the owner of the deposit is Muslim or non-Muslim. This ordinance is, in fact, one of the principles of the declaration of the rights of human kind in Islam ¹.

Even the scientists of a society are the depositaries. They are charged with a duty not to conceal the facts. Our children are also the deposits of Allah with us.

We must not neglect training and educating them. Beyond than that, our existence and whatever power Allah (s.w.t.) has given us are the deposits of Allah, and we should try to protect them carefully.

A tradition narrated from Imam –Sadiq (as) about the importance of '**deposit**' indicates that once he (as) told one of his companions:

"If the murderer of Hadrat Ali (as) trusted me a deposit, or wanted me to advise him, or consulted me, and I accepted that from him, certainly I would be honest in the deposition." ²

In many Islamic traditions, the purpose of the term 'deposit', mentioned in the current verse, has been introduced the leadership of the society, the men of which are Ahlul-Bayt (as). This is the clear extension of practising this verse. ³

Surah An-Nisa', Verse 59

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

59. "O' you who have Faith! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. Then, if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and very good in the end."

This verse, together with a few verses next to it, discuss about one of the most important matters of Islam, that is, the subject of leadership. They determine the true source of imitation of Muslims for the different social and religious affairs that they may have.

At first, it commands those who have faith, saying:

"O' you who have Faith! Obey Allah..."

It is obvious that, for a believing person, all obedience must be led to the obedience of *Allah*. Then, any form of leadership must originate from His pure Essence and be adopted to His command, because it is He Who is the Ruler and the genetic Owner of the world of existence, and every sovereignty and ownership should be under His command.

For the second stage it, says:

"... and obey the Messenger ..,"

Obey the Prophet who is immaculate and never speaks out of desire 4, an Apostle appointed from the side of *Allah* amongst people, whose word is the word of *Allah*, and whose rank and position have been bestowed to him by *Allah*.

And, for the third stage, it says:

"... and those charged with authority among you..."

Obey such ones who are from the inside of the Islamic society and protect both the divine religion and worldly affairs of people.

After that, it says:

"... Then, if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and very good in the end."

Who are 'Those Charged with Authority'?

All the Shi'ite commentators have the same attitude on this matter that the purpose of the phrase /ulil-'amr/ mentioned in this verse, is the immaculate Imams to whom the physical and spiritual leadership of the Islamic society, consisting of all affairs of life, have been given from the side of *Allah* and His Apostle (S), and it does not conclude any other than them.

This meaning is said according to the contents of 33 authentic traditions cited in *At-Tafsir-ul Burhan*, vol. I, pp. 381–386 (second edition).

Of course, under some conditions, the obedience of those who are appointed to a rank and charge a position in the society is necessary. This obedience is not for that they themselves are 'those charged with authority', but for that they are agents of 'those charged with authority'.

Explanations

1. Absolute obedience from the Messenger of *Allah* and 'those charged with authority' is a token for inerrancy of those magnanimous ones. Thus, any denotation expansion which is stated for 'those charged with authority' is not valid, if the one is not infallible.
2. The repetition of the word /ati'u/ 'obey' is the secret of the kind of orders. The holy Prophet (S) sometimes stated the ordinances of *Allah*, and sometimes gave the governmental commands, since he had both offices of 'prophecy' and government. 5
3. The name of 'those charged with authority' is mentioned next to the names of *Allah* and the Apostle, accompanied with an absolute obedience. This is a sign to show that the one in charge of Islamic government should be qualified with a high saintliness.

Based on many traditions, as was mentioned in the commentary of the verse, the purpose of the phrase 'those charged with authority' is Ahlul-Bayt (as).

4. People ought to accept the Islamic system and support its godly leaders by their words and deeds.

"... Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you ..."

5. In obedience, hierarchical order should be observed, that is *Allah*, the Messenger, and those charged with authority.
6. One of the ways of: acknowledgement is comparison with opposites and contraries.
7. When speaking of mischief-makers, the extravagant, the misguided, the ignorant, the tyrants and so on, the Qur'an's command is: ***"Do not yield..."*** and ***"Do not follow ..."*** The conclusion is that the aspects of the word /ati'u/ 'obey' must be those whose obedience have not been prohibited of.

8. To obey false deities is forbidden.

9. If all groups assume the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet (S) as reliable testimonies, discords will be removed and unity will govern.

10. A complete religion must have a solution for discords. The Qur'an says:

"...refer it to Allah and the Messenger ..."

11. Those who are opponent to the orders of *Allah*, the Messenger, and 'those charged with authority' should doubt in their own religion, if they want to believe in truth.

"...if you believe..."

12. Farsightedness and being careful of the interests of long future, time is the standard of value.

"... This is better and very good in the end."

1. At-Tafsir-us-Safi, vol. 1, p. 425

2. Tafsir-us-Safi, vol. 1, p. 427

3. Tafsir-ul-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 380 (second edition) narrates 15 traditions upon this meaning.

4. Surah An-Najm, No. 53, Verse 3.

5. Allah addresses the Prophet (S) in the Qur'an both for the rank of statement (Surah An-Nahl, No. 16, Verse 44) and 'for the rank of government (Surah An-Nisa', No. 4, Verse 105).

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