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Section 9

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 75-77

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلاَمَ اللّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

وَإِذَا لَقُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلاَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىَ بَعْضٍ قَالُواْ أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَآجُّوكُم بِهِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ

أَوَلاَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

75 "Do you then hope that they would believe in you (in Faith),- and a party among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then perverted it after they had understood it, and they know (this) ? "
76. "And when they meet those who have Faith, they say: 'We believe', but when they are alone with one another, they say:, Do you speak to them of what Allah has revealed to you, that they may thereby dispute with you about this before your Lord ? Have you then no sense? ' "
77. "What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they hide and what they make known? "

Occasion of Revelation

Upon the occasion of the revelation of these first two verses, some of the commentators have narrated from Imam Baqir (as) who has said: "A group of the Jews, who had not enmity with the truth, when they met the Muslims they would tell them of what had been mentioned in the Turah about the specialties of Prophet Muhammad (S).

The leaders of the Jews understood the matter and told them to avoid informing Muslims of what was

cited in the Turah about the epithets of Prophet Muhammad (S) lest they would argue with the Jews about it before their Lord. Then this verse was revealed." 1

A Futile Expectation!

As noted from these verses, the Qur'an has discontinued the story of the Israelites and, with an instructive conclusion, has turned to the Muslim believers, saying:

"Do you then hope that they would believe in you (in Faith), and a party among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then perverted it after they had understood it, and they know (this)?"

Therefore, when you see that they reject the inspiring words of the Qur'an and the miracles of the holy Prophet of Islam (S), you should not be annoyed. They are the children of the same people who, as the elected members of the tribe, went to Mount Sinai, heard the words of *Allah,* and understood His instructions, but when they returned they altered them.

It is perceived from the phrase: '***and a party among them indeed…",*** that not all of them but a party, who probably formed the majority of them, were of those who perverted Allah's Words.

It is cited in 'Asbab-un-Nuzul ' that when some of the Jews returned from Mount Sinai, they told their people: ***"We heard that Allah ordered Moses,' whenever you can do My instructions do them, but when you cannot, leave them ",*** and this was the first perversion.

However, at the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S), it was expected that the Jews would accept this religion before others embraced it, because they were the followers of the Book, whereas the pagans were not. Besides that, they had learnt the epithets of the Prophet of Islam (S) from their own books.

But the Holy Qur'an says that, considering their previous bad reputation, your hope is of no avail. The reason is that some deviated characteristics which dominated the spirits of this group caused them to separate from truth, though it was well within the realm of their ability to embrace it.

The next verse uncovers another bitter fact about this deceitful hypocritical group. It says:

"And when they meet those who have Faith, they say: 'We believe'…"
"…but when they are alone with one another, they say:
'Do you speak to them of what Allah has revealed to you…."'
"…that they may thereby dispute with you about this before your Lord ? Have you then no sense? ' "

In commenting on this very verse, this probability also exists that the initial words of the verse are about the hypocritical Jews who pretended to be believers in the presence of the Muslims but in their absence they denied it. They even scorned those pure-hearted Jews who had conveyed the secrets of the Turah to the Muslims.

At any rate, this is a confirmation to what was said in the previous verse that a group with such attributes governing their spirits should not be expected to become faithful.

The phrase: / fatahallahu 'alaykum /' ***what Allah has revealed to you'*** may mean: 'the Divine command which was in the authority of the Children of Israel'. Or, the phrase may refer to the idea that *Allah* had opened the doors of the divine secrets and the prophecies about the coming religion unto them.

It is noteworthy that this verse clearly shows that the Faith of this hypocritical group in *Allah* was so weak and hollow that they considered Him as an ordinary person and imagined that if they could conceal a fact from the Muslims, it would be concealed from *Allah,* too.

Then, in the next verse, it frankly says:

"What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they hide and what they make known? "

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 78-79

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَظُنُّونَ

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَـذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ لِيَشْتَرُواْ بِهِ ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

78. ***"And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but only fancies and mere conjectures."***
79. ***" So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say: , This is from Allah, so that they may sell it for a little price, so, woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn."***

Occasion of Revelation

A group of the learned men of the Jews altered the epithets of the holy Prophet (S) mentioned in the Turah. This perversion was contrived to protect their social positions and benefits which they used to obtain from their common people over the years.

When the Prophet of Islam (S) announced his mission and they recognized his epithets coincided with what was mentioned in the Turah, they were afraid that their profits would be endangered if the fact became evident. Therefore, they wrote some epithets completely different from what was actually cited in the Turah.

The ordinary Jews, who had heard the true epithets of the Prophet of Islam (S), more or less, asked their

scholars frequently whether this Prophet was the same promised prophet whose advent they had given them glad tidings of. Then the Jewish savants and scholars decided to recite some perverted verses from the Turah to them in order to make them content thereby.

The Jewish Learned Men's Plots of Oppression Against the Laymen

Following the previous description about the vicious deeds of the Jews, these verses divide them into two definite groups: the laymen and the deceitful learned men. A few of the Jewish scholars, of course, accepted the truth and believed in Islam and joined the community of Muslims. It says:

"And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but only fancies and mere conjectures."

The phrase / ummiyun / 'the illiterates' is the plural form of the term / ummi / which, here, means an illiterate person who remains the same in his native endowments as he was when he was born without any external education or training from anyone whosoever; and this state is ordinarily known as illiteracy.

Or, this case also occurs because some mothers, because of their naive motherly love for their children, ignorantly do not let their children separate from them and go to schools to study.

The term / amaniyy / is the plural form of / amniyyah / 'conjecture', and, here, it may refer to the privileges, vain desires, wishful thinking and mere conjectures of the Jews that they considered for themselves.

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The second group was the Jewish priests and savants who often altered the facts for their own benefit, as the Qur'an says:

"So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say: 'This is from Allah..."
"...so that they may sell it for a little price..."
"...so, woe to them for what their hands have written..."
"...and woe to them for what they earn..."

From the last meanings of the verse, it is well understood that they had used impious means and had come up with an incorrect conclusion.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 80-82

وَقَالُواْ لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلاَّ أَيَّاماً مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِندَ اللّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

بَلَى مَن كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيـئَتُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

80. ***"And they said: 'The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days'. Say: 'Have you taken such a promise from Allah, .for He never fails in His promise? Or do you speak against Allah what you do not know? ' "***
81. ***"Yea! Whoever earns evil and is encompassed by his sins, –these are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein shall they abide forever."***
82. ***"And those who have Faith and do deeds of righteousness –they are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein shall they abide forever."***

The Qur'an, here, points to one of the false statements of the Jews of which they were proud and that very pride was the origin of part of their deviation. Thus the Qur'an responds to it:

"And they said: 'The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days... ' "
"...Say: 'Have you taken such a promise from Allah, for He never fails in His promise? Or do you speak against Allah what you do not know?"

One of the most obvious reasons for the stubbornness and egoism of this group is their belief in the' preference of the Jewish race over all other races, and that they are different from other nations, and that their sinners will have to tolerate the Fire only for a few days as 'their punishment and, therefore, Paradise will be theirs exclusively forever.

This claim of privileges is not logical in any aspect, because, before *Allah,* there is no difference between the members of the human race from the point of rewards or punishments for their deeds.

Can they support the expectation to their claim of being exceptional among nations and therefore receiving special treatment regarding the general law of penalties by describing something they have done to deserve it?

However, the above verse with a logical statement refuses their vain imaginations and denotes that their claims depict one of these two conditions: they should either have taken a particular promise from *Allah* on the matter –that they have not –or, they tell lies and calumniate against Him.

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The next verse expresses a common and universal law which is logical from any point of view. It says:

"Yea! whoever earn evil and is encompassed by his sins, –these are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein shall they abide forever."

This is a general rule for the sinners belonging to any sect, nation, in any locality, and at any time.

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There is also a universal, general law for the pious believers, which the next verse announces:

"And those who have Faith and do deeds of righteousness –they are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein shall they abide forever."

Explanation: Earning Sin

The Arabic term /kasb/ and / iktisab/ both mean: 'to earn or gain something willingly and consciously'.

Earnings are received in return for something done to profit one's self. This is quite different from merely falling into evil. It is to selfishly seek one's own gain that is evil.

One sin leads to another sin and thus the conscience of the individual gradually becomes deadened until sinning becomes natural and normal for that person and he is totally abandoned to evil and attempts to justify his actions and to deny that he deserves eternal punishment.

The law of cause and effect works in its natural order in the case of evil as in the case of virtue. Those who devote themselves wholly to evil, must naturally find themselves beset on every side by the consequent evil effects of the causative evil factors wrought by the individual.

But those who struggle against evil, however long it may take for them to overcome it, the inclination towards the evil, cannot be considered equivalent to those who are out to earn evil.

Those who struggle to overcome evil hate and detest it and the individual's earnest and sincere effort to overcome evil, naturally ends in the triumph of good in the human nature. With this endeavour of good against evil, the natural consequence of the struggle strengthens the nobility in the individual's personality.

But, purposefully yeilding to evil with a selfish motive –for any selfish gains, gradually erects a fortress of evil for the individual so that the access of good becomes more and more difficult and ultimately renders the individual's approach to any goodness as impossible.

As the individual is totally lost, for all times, to evil, he convicts himself to the perpetual consequences of the evil all around him forever.

These kinds of people are those who are referred to, later, in **Surah 2: 86** which says:

"Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter, –for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped."

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 83-86

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لاَ تَعْبُدُونَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَاناً وَذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ
حُسْناً وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنكُمْ وَأَنتُم مِّعْرِضُونَ

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لاَ تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءكُمْ وَلاَ تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَـؤُلاء تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقاً مِّنكُم مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَى
تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاء مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلاَّ
خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

83. ***"And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel (instructing): 'You shall not worship any but Allah; and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans, and the needy, and speak kind words to people, keep up the prayer, and pay the poor-rates (zakat)'. Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you backslide (even now)."***

84. ***"And (remember) when We made a covenant with you: 'You shall not shed your blood, nor expel one another from your dwellings " then you confirmed it while you bore witness***

85. ***"Yet you kill one another and expel a group of your people from their dwellings, helping others against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them - yet their very expulsion was forbidden for you. Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (another) part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but disgrace, in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection to be consigned to the most terrible punishment? And Allah is not heedless of what you do."***

86. ***"Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter, - for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped."***

The Breachers of the Covenant!

In a few of the verses mentioned before, the covenant of the Children of Israel was hinted at, but no details were given about it. Through the verses under discussion, *Allah* reminds them of some of the items of this covenant.

Most of these items –or all of them – should be counted as the fundamental principles and permanent laws of the Divine religions, because this same covenant and these instructions, in some form or other, are comprehensively found in every religion.

In these verses, the Qur'an severely scorns and blames the Jews because they broke their covenant, and threatens them with disgrace in the life of this world and the most grievous punishment in the Hereafter.

This covenant, that the Children of Israel were witnesses of and confessed to, contains the following items:

1. Monotheism and worshipping *Allah,* as the verse says:

"And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel (instructing): 'You shall not worship any but Allah..."
2. ***"...and (you shall do) good to (your) parents..."***
3. ***"...and to the near of kin and to the orphans, and the needy..."***
4. ***"...and speak kind words to people..."***
5. ***"...keep up the prayer..."***
6. ***"...and pay the poor-rates (zakat).'..."***

"...Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you backslide (even now)."

7. ***"And (remember) when We made a covenant with you: 'You shall not shed your blood..."***
8. ***"...nor expel one another from your dwellings..."***
9. ***"...then you confirmed it while you bore witness." (This item of the covenant is perceived from the sentence: "Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (another) part?")***

But you disregarded many of these aspects of your covenant with *Allah.*

"Yet you kill one another and expel a group of your people from their dwellings,.."
"...helping others against them in sin and enmity..."

All of these deeds you did are a breach of the covenant you had taken with *Allah.*

"...and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them-..."
"...Yet their very expulsion was forbidden for you,"

It is surprising that you, in paying ransom, and setting your captives free, comply with the ordinances of the Turah and the Divine Covenant:

"...Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (another) part?..."
"...What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but disgrace, in the life of this world..."
"....and on the Day of Resurrection to be consigned to the most terrible punishment?..."

"...And Allah is not heedless of what you do,"

Then, He, the Just, will take all of them into account and will judge upon you according to your deeds in the Divine Court of Justice.

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The last of the verses under discussion, in fact, states their main motive for doing these contradictory actions, It says:

"Those are they who have bought the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter, –.."

For this reason:

"....for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped, "

Explanation: The Best Strategy for the Survival of Nations

These verses have been revealed about the Children of Israel, but they contain a series of universal laws for the whole human race throughout the world. These laws consist of some advice for those nations who wish to survive and to exist successfully, as well as the secrets of failure and destruction.

From the view point of the Qur'an, nations will be happy and able to continue living when the individuals of that nation, avoiding sins, attach themselves to the greatest Power and rely on that Everlasting Source for help in all conditions.

It is obvious that this Origin can be none but *Allah,* the Exalted. Therefore, they should obey *Allah* and bow only to Him, i.e. being sincere unto Him alone in obedience.

If nations follow this law, they will be afraid of none. Genuine sincerity and perfect intentions of a believer in the way of *Allah,* do not tolerate the yielding of himself, in any regard, to anything or anybody else other than the One and Only True God, *Allah.*

For it will mean the individual's surrender to his self which is nothing more than surrender to Satan which is the equivalent of worshipping him.

As it was already pointed out, the means of salvation, i.e. for a nation to survive and endure successfully, is firm adherence of its members to the Divine Covenant and their faithful and loyal attachment to the divinely commissioned guides.

It is obvious that misdeeds or sins weaken faith, adherence, and the love of goodness, and the excess of it may result in the total severance of the Holy connection, and in the individuals becoming totally lost in the darkness of infidelity, hence eternal punishment and no salvation in either this world or the coming world will be the result for such a nation.

These verses of the Holy Qur'an, if studied properly and judged dispassionately almost suffice to illustrate what is meant by the religion Islam and what kind of life Islam invites its believers, or all nations to live. And if the members of nations act upon these commandments, I how peaceful, pleasant, and enjoyable will be the life here on earth.

These are on one side, but on the other side, the secret of the failure and defeat of nations, which finally leads to their destruction and abolishment, lies in the existence of hate and enmity between them and between the members inside each nation, i.e. being heedless to the above mentioned commandments.

Such a nation will soon perish because of disregarding *Allah's* covenant by not relying on Him, by not respecting and helping their parents, family members, kindreds, neighbours, and all fellow men, by shedding blood and by not observing the rights of others by expelling them out of their houses or lands in order to occupy their properties:

"...You shall not shed your blood, nor expel one another from your dwellings,..."

And, finally, one of the factors of the destruction of nations is unjust discrimination in the execution of laws, i.e. when they observe those laws which protect their personal profits but neglect what is beneficial for the society.

"...Do you then believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in (another) part?..."

And these are some of the causes of either the development or failure of nations from the viewpoint of the Qur'an.

1. Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 142

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