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Exegesis (Tafsir) of verses of the Holy Quran

"Surely We revealed it on the grand night. "(Al-Qadr, 97: 1)

Q.45: Did the Holy Quran come down to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in one single night or it was revealed in stages? Please explain.

A: The apparent meaning of the above-quoted verse and the verse:

"The month of Ramazan is that in which the Quran was revealed..." (Al-Bagarah 2: 185)

And the verse:

"Surely We revealed it on a blessed night..." (Ad- Dukhaa n 44:3)

. ..is that the Holy Quran was sent down as a whole to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) during the Night of Power (Shabe Qadr) in the holy month of Ramadan. But the apparent meaning of another holy verse:

"And it is a Quran which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions. "(Al-Isra, 17: 106)

...is that the Holy Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in stages. According to an inordinate number of narrations it was revealed stage by stage in a period of twenty three years (period of the office of the Prophet). Apparently there seems to be contradiction between this verse and the verses mentioned earlier. Commentators have presented various explanations and the best of them being that which is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) in the beginning; that the entire Quran came down to Baitul Maamoor from the source of revelation at one time and thereafter, as required by circumstances, angel Jibraeel brought the verses in stages to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) during a period of 23 years.

A researching commentator has mentioned the possibility that the Holy Quran, which was for

the first time sent down to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in one instance was not exactly in the form of words and text, which we see now. On the contrary, the truth of the Quran, understanding of which is above the perceptibility of common people, was put in the holy heart of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) at once and then, step by step, this truth was brought out through the tongue of the Prophet during a period of 23 years in form of Quranic letters and words (text). Witnesses in support of this probability have also quoted from the text of the Holy Quran. (Whoever desires may refer to volume 2 of *Tafsir al-Mizan*).

Question 46

Q.46: Why is the Holy Quran not compiled in order of its revelation?

A: Doubtlessly, in compiling verses of Quran, their position in time has not been considered. Verses revealed in Medina during the last period of the Prophet have become a part of chapters revealed earlier in Mecca and on the other hand, verses revealed in Mecca are included in Medinite Surahs and annulled verses are placed after the annulling etc. However this disorder has not harmed the beauty and eloquence of the scriptures and also not come in the way of its description of divine commandments and overall presentation.

"...and their killing the prophets unjustly ..." (Aale-'Imraan, 3: 181)

Question 47

Q.47: The converse of this implies that prophets could be killed rightfully! Is suc:h a thing not against infallibility of prophets?

A: This question can be answered in two ways:

First: Killers can be of two kinds: Sometimes those who commit this crime consider themselves rightful

according to their complete belief and relying on some doubts. Sometimes it also so happens that the killers know that this act is out of place and that it is without right, yet they kill a person on account of their enmity and wretchedness.

Obviously, the latter deed is doubtlessly worse and its punishment ought to be harsher. Those who killed messengers (a.s.) were of the second kind, that is, despite knowing that their act was a misdeed and misplaced, they committed the crime. In short, the killing of messengers was, besides being without right, even in the eyes of themselves it was wrong.

The adjective and its condition are of two types: essential adjective, which is present with the described thing in all conditions and disjointed adjective, which is sometimes present and sometimes not and when the adjective is used, but it does not apply to the described noun; it is there merely for emphasis and to make the matter clearer. There is no doubt that uunjustly" is a permanent adjective for "their killing the prophets", it can never imply that killing of messengers could also be rightful. Also in accordance with rules of the science of principles, it is established that the adjective has no absolute meaning.

Question48

"Call upon Me, I will answer you."(AI-Mo'min, 40:60)

Q.48: This verse is absolute and without any condition whereas it is mentioned in narrations that there are considerations and that in many cases supplication is not answered Please explain why it is so.

A: A divine promise cannot be broken. He gives to everyone who supplicated from Him everything as He has promised. But the condition is that it should be in the real interest of one who asks. This is because the answering by God is by way of mercy and kindness.

Granting a thing, which is not in the interest of 'asker', is against kindness and beneficence. It is established and known to all that man is too weak to find out his own benefit as he does not have the knowledge of every relevant matter, profits and harms or losses.

"...and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you ..." (Al-Bagarah, 2:216)

So if the thing asked by Him is in his interest, He grants it to him. But, if it is not in his interest, He, instead of that, grants him a thing which would benefit him or He stores it for him in the future (life in

Hereafter).

If someone says: "God surely grants the beneficial things to His servants, may they ask for it or not." We may say that there are two kinds of beneficial things: Some are inevitable and some depend on asking and praying for. Since finding them out is beyond man's capacity, one should pray for all known good things, because, if the thing asked for is dependable on supplication, it is granted. Otherwise if it was decreed, the supplicant gets the reward of reciting a supplication which makes one nearer to God. Thus it entitles one to more grace.

It must also be known that sometimes it also so happens that the supplication is answered, but with a delay. Consequently, due to needfulness, the person supplicates more and more. This also is a divine strategy whereby the person gets more and more from Almighty Allah. It is mentioned in Al–Kafi that Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

"Whenever Almighty Allah likes the voice of His servant, He delays granting the desired thing so that he may supplicate to Him more and more."

Regarding what is mentioned in the question that 'despite fulfilling the required conditions, sometimes the supplication is not answered ', this statement is incorrect. What is required is fulfillment of conditions for supplication. Also very few supplications fulfill this requirement of maintaining all conditions. If there is such a supplication, it is very unlikely to remain

unanswered. For example, the most essential condition which is usually disregarded is sincerity, that is, one who supplicates does not see the ability to answer the supplication in anyone, except Almighty Allah. He must be sure that there is no cause, which can bring him what he wants and hence his attention should always be on Only One God from the bottom of his heart. The holy verse says:

"Call on Me", that is Me and only Me, none else and also adds:

"...I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me" (AI-Bagarah, 2: 186)

This is the condition mentioned in the following verse:

"Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him..." (An-Naml, 27:62)

That is, a condition in which one gets cut off from everyone and everything else other than Only One Allah and the state of unrest wherein one has no alternative, but to look at Only One God. Acceptance is

promised to such a supplication.

Again, unrest is of two kinds:

- I. Innate
- 2. Legislative

The innate is one wherein there is no apparent means and ways and the needy person is compelled to look at Only One God (the Creator of Causes), for example, a man drowning in the sea.

Legislative unrest is when a man is fully sure and has certainty about the truth that Only One God has total might and that nothing can be effective without His Will; that every cause is subject to His wish. This certainty overtakes every other thought and imagination without any superstition. Then in every situation he finds himself to be extremely in need of God and nothing else remains in his heart. Obviously such a state of mind and heart is so high that it is earnestly desired by great devoted people as mentioned in Imam Amirul Momineen 's 'Whispered prayer' of Shaban (*Munajaate Shabania*):

"O Allah grant me the grace to cut off relations with this world and make me Yours."

That is why, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied to one who asked:

"Why our supplication are not answered?"

"Because you call One Whom you have not properly recognized."

This shows that supplications for which acceptance is promised are very few. Yet it goes without saying that though there are few supplications, which fulfill all conditions of

acceptance, what is basically behind the promise is a vast door of God 's grace and kindness. The Almighty also most of the time deals mercifully and answers prayers even if they do not fulfill conditions. This sinful writer himself has experienced thousands of times that though his supplications were quite defective or without required conditions, the Merciful Lord granted what was asked from Him.

Question 49

Q.49: In verse 5 of Surah Nisa, God says: Take two, three or four wives. But if you fear that you will not be able to do justice, take only one. But in verse 129, He says: You will never be able to do justice between women. Apparently there is a contradiction between these two verses:

فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ؟

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً

"...then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one..." (An-Nisa, 4:3)

"And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination ..." (An-Nisa, 4: 129)

Kindly explain, in this context, the difference between apparent justice and ideal justice.

A: The justice demanded in the first verse is a justice when one has more than one wife. It pertains to justice in their rights and maintenance of equality between them, because giving preference only to one becomes injustice to others. For example, if he has slept with one wife for one night, he must also sleep for one night with all others also. If he goes to bed with one for two nights he should also go bed with others also for two nights and so on.

Such justice must be maintained in giving maintenance to all wives. Given preference to one must not do injustice to others.

On the contrary it is desirable that such equality must also be shown in the matter of looking at them with equally smiling face. If the husband passed a night with one, he should be near her next morning also. There is no doubt that such justice which pertains to equality in rights,

is quite possible and practicable and hence it is commanded by God.

But the justice referred to in the other verse, which says: "You will not be able to do justice" and which is beyond man's control is a thing which pertains to heartfelt love and affection. The reason of saying thus is how can one love all wives equally when such a thing depends on heart's inclination, which is not under one's control; for example, beauty. The more beautiful one will naturally make one's heart incline to her more. Same is the case of conduct and behavior. One who is better in this respect will naturally hold more attraction.

It is mentioned in Al-Kafi that Ibne Abil Awja objected to Hisham Ibne Hakam saying: These two verses contradict one another. Hisham asked about it from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and he replied: "The first verse is about food and the second is about love."

In short, justice in this meaning of equality in love and affection is an uncontrollable thing. The Lord of the Universe says: "Do not show total disinclination..." Be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination in such a manner that due to absence or shortage of inclination of heart, you may not show even the justice which you can, which is mentioned in the first verse. So do not behave in such a way with one that her condition may be like one who has been divorced and who can marry anyone else nor like the married one who should get her rights.

It is narrated that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) showed such a perfect and complete justice to his wives, especially in the matter of distribution between them. He used to say: "My God, this is my distribution, wherein I have done according to my ability in the matter of justice in companionship and maintenance. So please, do not hold me responsible in the matter which You own and which I do not possess", that is in the matter of natural inclination.

وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ

"...and do not conceal testimony ... " (AI-Bagarah, 2:283)

Question 50

Q.50: The Holy Quran does not allow concealing of testimony and has made the testimony of two just witnesses an essential part of dispensing justice. But in case of adultery, it demands four witnesses. Why? If three persons testify and the fourth is not found, it (Quran) orders penalty to the said three. Does this command not compel hiding of testimony against the said verse? Does it not embolden people to commit adutery?

A: A case is established by the testimony of two just persons according to Islamic Shariah, but in the matter of adultery or sodomy, testimony of four persons is needed. This is an obligatory order full of wisdom, the strategies whereof are hidden from us. Perhaps it is because the Almighty Allah dislikes publicizing these two sins, because their open publicity is likely to encourage others as well as decrease the seriousness of these two greater sins.

Secondly, their exposure in public is against the virtue of modesty and self respect. It is mentioned traditions that the modesty of God is greater than that of messengers and modesty of messengers is greater than that of the faithful.

As regards the problem of hiding testimony: It is obligatory to give witness and prohibited to hide it when establishment of truth depends on it and on condition that it should not harm one who testifies or believers in general; on the contrary even against whom testimony is given. For instance, one against whom a testimony is given is insolvent and the witness pays no attention to this and after establishment of truth, he will be arrested and imprisoned. In such case a witness cannot testify.

So if one wants to testify in a religious (Sharai) court against someone in case of adultery, he must first of all see whether there are three other just witnesses who had witnessed that heinous act and if they are prepared to testify. In that case the testimony is allowed. But if suppose there are no more than three witnesses and they testify according to Shariat rules, that case is not proved.

On the contrary the three would become liable for Qazaf. 1 The reason is that they testified without legal proof: Since the sentence awarded to the three witnesses is from their own side, there is no room for objection. Now as mentioned in the question it is incorrect that this encourages adultery. On the contrary this discourages Qazaf so that people would be afrailed of accusing each other of adultery and thereby also realize the seriousness of this sin.

Question 51

Q.51: The Almighty Allah has at the end of Surah Luqman in Quran, reserved knowledge of the unseen only for Himself. But it is seen that some persons do give information of the unseen and it also proves to be absolutely true. Please remove the doubt in this regard.

A: Encompassing the entire knowledge of the seen and unseen throughout the universe is only for Almighty Allah, Who has neither a partner nor any like. Just as He is the Creator and controller of everything, only He encompasses everything and all information.

As for knowledge of all creation about the unseen, it is known through many narrations that some categories of knowledge of unseen are entirely and only with God and no one except Him knows about it, not even the nearest angels or messengers sent by Him. Perhaps it is in this category that lies information of reality and being of Almighty Allah, the Eternal, the Almighty. But except this, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imams (a.s.) have knowledge of unseen to the extent God reveals it to them.

Therefrom what is meant by verses of Quran and narrations of Imam which say that knowledge of unseen is only with Allah and which is not with even prophets and Imams (a.s.) is His personal knowledge regarding unseen worlds. Whatever messengers and Imams know is taught to them by God through revelation. There is no doubt that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and Imams did possess knowledge about a number of unseen matters many of which are recorded in books. But all of it was what Almighty Allah made them aware of.

Some other people also obtain knowledge of unseen, which they might reveal to others; some clever persons and astrologers forecast future happen ings and diviners conclude something through charms and ascetism; and there are some who show that they can control a jinn and claim that a friendly jinn gives them hidden information; it must be understood that none of them possess a road to the supernatural totally and that their information is but partial and that too not covering everything, but only a little about things to happen in this world.

Secondly, all their information is sketchy and partial. None is based on knowledge, research or investigation and which cannot be relied upon logically. If a doctor holds the hand of a patient and says something about future, it is more reliable compared to what the aforesaid fellows say. None of them has any solid basis, which can call for putting trust in them. On the contrary they themselves are not quite confident of it, all of which is based on conjecture.

Most of their forecasts are proved incorrect as mentioned in books. Even those who claim to have friendship with jinns would agree that their information is short, incomplete and insufficient. Many a time their untruth is exposed. For example one of them predicts the death of a person on the basis of his knowledge of circumstances. But he does not know that it will be delayed on account of his good deeds like charity, supplication or a good turn to relatives.

That is why Islamic Shariat has prohibited consulting those who claim to foretell the future. Islamic law does not allow anyone to be influenced by their forecasts. On the contrary religion commands putting entire trust in Almighty Allah and performing good deeds like supplication and charity etc.

Summarily, one who knows everything everywhere by his own personal knowledge is Only God. What information messengers and Imams have given about unseen is due to grace bestowed by God. As mentioned, none of the fortune–tellers have definite knowledge of things to happen. That some of what they say proves correct is merely by accident. It is therefore a fact that their statements contain more falsehood than truth.

It must also be remembered that most of what they say is based on guess work and not knowledge of unseen. It is mere superstition on which their so-called knowledge is based. Moreover what they say is mostly based on apparent causes.

Knowledge of unseen is only and only with God Almighty and with those messengers and Imams whom He is bestowed it by His grace. The above mentioned fortune-tellers cannot give the exact hour of any happening. For example, if they say that Zaid will die, they cannot say exactly at what time. Such exact and final and complete knowledge is only with Almighty Allah: Indeed the unseen is known only to Allah and there is no power or strength except by Allah.

1. Accusing a chaste person of adultery or sodomy.

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