

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 94 – 99

(٩٤) قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

(٩٥) وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْا هَٰذَا أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

(٩٦) وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَىٰ حَيَاتِهِمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحِّزِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ

(٩٧) قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

(٩٨) مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

(٩٩) وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيْنَاتٍ بَيْنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ

Say: “If the future abode with Allah is purely for you to the exclusion of the people then invoke death if you are truthful” (94).

And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before, and Allah knows the unjust ones (95).

And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life, and (greedier) than even those who are polytheists; every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement, and Allah sees what they do (96).

Say: “Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah’s Command, verifying that which is before it, and guidance and good news for the believers (97).

Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael – so surely Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers” (98).

And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs, and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors (99).

Commentary

Qur’an: Say: “If the future abode... ”: The Jews claimed, **“Fire shall not touch us but for a few days” (2:80).** When they were told to believe in what Allah had revealed, they declared:

“We believe in that which was revealed to us” (2:91).

All this implied that only they would be saved on the Day of Resurrection to the exclusion of all the others; that their deliverance and happiness in the next world would be unmarred by any unpleasant experience as the Fire shall not touch them but for a few days – equal in number to the day they worshipped the calf. To remove that self-delusion and conceit, Allah put a challenge to them, to show them their true face, to make them realize that their claims were without any substance.

He (Allah) told His Apostle to say to them: “If the future abode... is for you...” The “future abode” points to the felicity and happiness of that abode; the owner of a house arranges and manages it in the best possible way, and decorates it according to his taste and liking “with Allah”, that is, firmly established with Allah, by His order and His permission; the phrase has the same import here as in the verse:

Surely the religion with Allah is Islam (3:19).

“purely”, that is, unmixed with punishment or humiliation – utmost that you think possible is a punishment of just a few days. “to the exclusion of the people”, because you presume that all religions, except your own, are false. If you really think so, “then invoke death if you are truthful”.

This challenge is similar to the one given in verse:

Say: “O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death if you are truthful” (62:6).

The argument is very clear about which nobody can have any doubt whatsoever. Any man (nay! even an animal having a limited perception and sensitivity), if given total freedom to choose between comfort and discomfort, will at once opt for the comfort, without any hesitation, without any contemplation.

Put before him a life polluted with trouble and turmoil and another clean and pure, and tell him to take hold of any one; naturally, and without any doubt, he will grab at the pure one. If for any reason he is prevented from the life of his choice, he will always dream of it, and will remain looking for any opportunity to lay his hands upon it.

If the Jews are truthful in their claim that the other world's pure happiness belongs to them to the exclusion of others, then they must yearn for it with their hearts, words and deeds.

“And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before”, for example, the killings of the prophets, the disbelief in Musa (a.s.) and breaking of the covenants, “and Allah knows the unjust ones”.

Qur'an: on account of what their hands have sent before: It is a metaphorical reference to the “deeds”. Most of the external deeds are done by hands; then the finished product is sent to the one who wants it or may benefit from it.

The sentence has two allegorical allusions: it counts every deed as having been done by hands; and it ascribes the action of “sending” to the hands while in fact it is the man who sends his deeds before.

Actions of a man, and especially those done regularly, are a clear mirror of his unconscious and sub-conscious personality. Evil deeds expose the evil nature of the doer – and such a nature does not like meeting its Lord or staying in the abode of His friends.

Qur'an: And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life: It is an explanation of the divine word, “And they will never invoke it...” They do not yearn for death because they are greediest of all men for the life of this world. It is this greed and avid craving to remain in this world which prevents them from looking forward to the next abode.

The word, “life”, is used in this verse as a common noun – it is to show how insignificant and trifling this life is; Allah has said:

And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play, and as for the next abode, that most surely is life – did they but know (29:64).

Qur'an: *and (greedier) that even those who are polytheists:* Apparently the conjunctive, “and”, joins this clause to the word, “men”, that is, you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for life.

Qur'an: *and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement:* The verse's literal translation: and it is not a remover of him from the chastisement his being granted a long life.

“*ma*” (ما = not, no, particle of negation); the pronoun “it” is that of *sha'h*¹ and *qissah* (ضَمِيرُ الشَّأْنِ وَالْقِصَّةِ) “his being granted a long life” is the subject preceded by the predicate, that is, “is not a remover of him...”

The sentence may also be syntactically analysed in another way: the pronoun, “it”, may refer to the love each of them had of being granted a life of a thousand years. It would accordingly mean that that love of theirs would not ward off the Divine Chastisement from them; in this case, the clause, “his being granted a long life” will be a description of that love.

Anyhow, what the verse says is this: They shall never invoke the death, and I swear that you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for this base and insignificant life which prevents them from the happy and good life of the next abode; you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for this life, although the latter do not believe in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, and consequently their love for this life should be unparalleled; every one of them loves that he should be granted the longest life, but even the longest life cannot remove him further off from the Divine Chastisement, because life, no matter how long it is, is limited and has to come to an end.

Qur'an: *every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years:* that is, the longest life. “a thousand” is used to denote numerousness. In Arabic, it is the highest de-nomination which is described by a single word. Higher denominations are shown by repetition and combination, for example, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a thousand thousand (i.e., a million).

Qur'an: *And Allah sees what you do:* “*al-Basir*” (الْبَصِيرُ) is one of the beautiful names of Allah; it signifies that although He does not have a body or an eye, He is fully cognizant of all things which we perceive with our eyes. It shows a facet of the name, *al-'Alim* (الْعَلِيمُ = the Knowing).

Qur'an: *Say: “Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command:* Apparently the verse was revealed as a reply to something the Jews had said – they arrogantly refused to believe in what was revealed to the Apostle of Allah (S), on the pretext that they were enemies of Gabriel who had the charge of bringing the revelation to Muhammad (S).

Allah replied to them in two verses – concerning the Qur'an and Gabriel both. Also the traditions giving

the background of the verses confirm it. The verses contain four replies to their arrogance in denial of the Qur'an.

First: Gabriel has revealed the Qur'an to your heart by Allah's Command, not by his own wish. Therefore, even if they feel enmity towards Gabriel, it should not prevent them from believing in a revelation sent down by Allah's Command.

Second: The Qur'an verifies the Divine Book which was revealed before it and which they have in their hands. How can they believe in a book and deny another which verifies it?

Third: The Qur'an is a guidance for those who believe in it.

Fourth: It is also a good news for the believers. How can a sane person turn his face away from guidance and good news, even if it is brought to him by a supposed enemy of his?

So far as their professed enmity towards Gabriel was concerned, they were replied as follows:

Gabriel is one of the angels of Allah; he has no authority except to follow and obey the Divine Command – just like Michael and other angels. They are honoured servants of Allah; they do not disobey His command, and they do as they are told.

Likewise, the apostles of Allah have no authority except by Allah and from Allah. To have enmity towards them, to harbour hatred for them is enmity and hatred towards Allah Himself. Therefore, whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael, so surely Allah is his enemy.

All these replies are clearly given in these two verses.

Qur'an: *for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command:* Apparently, it should have been "to my heart"; instead, it says, "to your heart". The pronoun has been changed from the first to the second person to draw attention to an important factor:

So far as the revelation of the Qur'an is concerned, neither Gabriel has any choice or authority of his own in bringing it down (he is subject to the Divine command, which he faithfully carries out) nor the Apostle of Allah (s. a.w. a.) has any choice or authority of his own in receiving it and conveying it to his *ummah*; his heart is the receptacle of revelation, on which he has no control at all and which he is bound to convey to his people.

The Jews have been mentioned in these verses sometimes in the second person, and sometimes in the third. Their admonition and condemnation has continued for a long time; and the Speaker wants to show that they do not deserve the honour of being addressed by Him.

That is why He frequently changes the styles, again and again going from the second to the third person pronouns. The audience gets the impression that the Speaker does not like to speak to them – because

of their heedlessness and depravity, but at the same time does not like to leave them as they are without pronouncing His judgment against them.

Qur'an: *the enemy of the unbelievers*: Instead of saying, “their enemy”, the verse uses the word, “enemy of the unbelievers”; it serves to show also the reason of that enmity. Allah is their enemy, because they are unbelievers, and Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers.

Qur'an: *and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors*: It explains the cause of their disbelief; they disbelieve because they are transgressors. Or, may be the definite article “the”, in “the transgressors” refers to the group mentioned in the beginning of the chapter:

But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors, who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation... (2:26–27)

As for Gabriel and how he brought the revelation to the heart of the Apostle of Allah (s. a.w. a.), we shall explain it, God willing, in another place; the same applies to Michael and other angels.

Traditions

Ibn 'Abbas explained the reason of the revelation of the verse, **Say: “*Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel...*”**, in these words: “When the Prophet came to Medina, Ibn Suriya and some Jews of Fadak asked him (some questions). They said: 'O Muhammad! How do you sleep? Because we have been told about the sleep of the Prophet who would come in the last days?'

He said: 'My eyes sleep while my heart is awake.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Now tell us about the child whether it is from the man or from the woman?' He said: 'As for the bones, the nerves and the veins, they are from the man; and as for the flesh, the blood, the nails and the hairs, they are from the woman.'

They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Then why is it that sometimes the child resembles his paternal uncles, without having a least likeness of his maternal uncles? And sometimes he resembles his maternal uncles without having any likeness at all to his paternal uncles?' He replied: 'He resembles to that parent's (side) whose fluid dominates the other's.' They said: 'You spoke the truth, O Muhammad! Now, tell us about your Lord, what is He?' Then Allah revealed (the Chapter 112):

Say: “*He, Allah is One...*”

Then Ibn Suriya said: 'One (more) thing; if you tell (us) about it, I shall believe in you and follow you. Which angel is it that brings to you that which Allah reveals to you?' He said: 'Gabriel.' (Ibn Suriya) said:

'He is our enemy; he brings the (order of) fighting, hard-ship and war. And Michael brings comfort and happiness. Had it been Michael who came to you (with revelation) we would have believed in you.' ”

The author says: Very many traditions (nearly *mutawatir* in number) have been narrated by both Sunni and Shi'ah narrators, that (when) the Apostle of Allah (s. a.w. a.) (slept) his eyes used to sleep but his heart kept awake.

Sleep did not make him unaware of himself; when asleep, he was well aware that he was asleep; when he dreamt he knew that he was dreaming. Not too often, this happens to some other good persons too when their souls are clean and they keep in touch with the Divine sublimity.

When the soul rises to that level, it can never be oblivious of the various changes occurring to itself in its worldly life, nor can it forget its relation to its Lord. At this stage, it may look at the world and its life taking the whole spectrum at one glance, as a man looks at a tree and perceives it all at once. In this detached manner, it observes that all human beings are asleep – not only those who are manifestly asleep, but those too who are thought to be awake.

Almost all men have taken shelter under sensual perception; have bound themselves to the fetters of materialism. They are in fact asleep, even when they think they are awake. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: “The people are asleep; when they die they will wake up...”

This topic will be further explained in other place; other sentences of this tradition too will be explained later

1. Sha'n (ضَمِيرُ الشَّأْنِ) is a personal pronoun (third person, masculine) which is used to begin a sentence. That of feminine gender is called the pronoun of qissah (ضَمِيرُ القِصَّةِ). The nearest thing to it in the English grammar is the indefinite demonstrative pronoun. (tr.)

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/al-mizan-exegesis-quran-vol-2-allamah-tabatabai/suratul-baqarah-verses-94-99>