

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 108 115

(١٠٨) أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ ۙ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ
الْكَفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

(١٠٩) وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا
حَسَدًا ۗ مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ

بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْخَطُّ ۗ فَأَعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

(١١٠) وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۗ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ ۗ تَجِدُوهُ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

(١١١) وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرِيًّا ۗ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ
قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۗ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

(١١٢) بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

(١١٣) وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ؕ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ؕ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ يَوْمَ أَلْقَى الْقِيَمَةَ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

(١١٤) وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذَكَرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ ؕ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا ؕ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ

أَنْ يَدُخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ ؕ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

(١١٥) وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ؕ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَسِعَ عِلْمَهُ

Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle, as Musa was questioned before? And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right way (108).

Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part, (even) after the truth has become manifest to them. But pardon and forgive (them) until Allah should bring about His command. Surely Allah has power over all things (109).

And keep up prayer and pay the zakat, and whatever good you send before for yourselves you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do (110).

And they say: “None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian”. These are their vain desires. Say: “Bring your proof if you are truthful” (111).

Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with

his Lord, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve (112).

And the Jews say: “The Christians do not follow anything (good) ”, and the Christians say: “The Jews do not follow anything (good) ”, while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they differ (113).

And who is more unjust than he who prevents (men from) the mosques of Allah, that His name shall not be remembered in them, and strives to ruin them? (As for) those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear; they shall meet with disgrace in this world, and they shall have great chastisement in the hereafter (114).

And Allah's is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing (115).

Commentary

Qur'an: *Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle...*: It appears from this sentence that some of the Muslims – although believing in the Prophet (S) – had put some questions to him not unlike the questions put to Musa (a.s.) by the Jews. That is why they have been placed here in line with the Jews for admonition.

The tradition too supports this interpretation.

Qur'an: *the right way*: that is, the straight path.

Qur'an: *Many of the People of the Book wish...*: Reportedly it refers to Huyayy ibn al-Akhtab and other Jews who were with him.

Qur'an: *But pardon and forgive (them)*: According to the exegetes this order was abrogated by the verse of fighting.

Qur'an: *until Allah should bring about His command*: As indicated above, this clause alludes to a command that was to be revealed in not too distant a time about the Jews. The case is similar to the verse:

(As for) *those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear* (2:115),

when read together with the verse:

the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this (very) year... (9:29).

The clause, “except in fear”, had hinted to the intended ban that was promulgated later.

We shall explain the meaning of “*al-amr*” (أَلْأَمْرُ) = command) under the verse:

And they ask you about the soul. Say: “The soul is from the command of My Lord” (17:85).

Qur’an: And they say: “None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian”: The verse explicitly joins the Christians with the Jews; from now on the sins and crimes of both will be enumerated together.

Qur’an: Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord: It reiterates for the third time the basic principle that the spiritual felicity does not depend on name or nomenclature, that no one can get honour with Allah except by true faith in, and total surrender to, Him.

The first declaration was in the verse:

Surely those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaens, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward... (2:62);

the second one was in the verse:

Yea! whoever earns evil... And (as for) ***those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden...*** (2:81–82);

the third is this verse under discussion.

A comparison of this verse with the previous two shows that the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allah; and “*al-ihsan*” (الْإِحْسَانُ) = to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.

Qur’an: while they recite the Book: that is, while they follow the Book revealed to them. They should not say such things because they have the Book with them and it clearly shows them where the truth is.

This explanation is supported by the next sentence, “Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say”. The word, “those who have no knowledge”, refers to the unbelievers (other than the People of the Book) and the polytheists of Arabia. They used to say, “The Muslims do not follow anything good”, or “The People of the Book do not follow anything good”.

Qur’an: And who is more unjust than he who prevents. Apparently it refers to the unbelievers and polytheists of Mecca. These two verses were revealed not long after the Apostle of Allah (S) emigrated to Medina.

Qur’an: it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear: The verb, “was”, shows that the sentence describes a past event. It perfectly fits the pagans of Mecca and their misdeeds.

The traditions say that “he who prevents” refers to the unbelievers of Mecca, it was they who prevented the Muslims from praying in the Sacred Mosque (*Masjidu 'l-Haram*) and in other mosques within the precinct of the Ka'bah.

Qur'an: *And Allah's is the East and the West*: The east and the west – any direction, whatsoever – really belong to Allah. His is the true mastership that cannot be altered or transferred; it is not like the possession known to us in our society's framework.

Allah's ownership permeates the possessed thing itself as well as its benefits and effects, unlike our ownership that covers only the benefits and effects, and not the thing itself.

A property, possession, *per se*, cannot stand except with its owner. Therefore, the east and the west, nay, all the directions whatsoever, exist because of Allah – the Owner. Allah preserves and manages the directions, and encompasses them. Anyone turning to any of the directions, turns in reality to Allah.

The east and the west are relative terms. They cover al-most all the directions, except the two imaginary points of the true north and the true south. That is why Allah left the clause, “whither you turn”, unconditional, and did not say, 'whither you turn of these two directions'.

To whatever direction one turns one's face, it is bound to be either east or west. The sentence, “And Allah's is the East and the West”, therefore, implies that all the directions belong to Allah.

The east and the west were selected for special mention because man fixes the directions with the help of rising and setting of the sun and other heavenly bodies.

Qur'an: *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face*: It puts the cause in place of the effect. What the sentence implies is as follows: To whichever direction you turn, it is allowed to you, because Allah's face is in that directions too.

The concluding clause, “surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing”, supports this interpretation. “*al-Wasi'*” (*الْوَاسِعُ*) = translated here as “ample-giving”) literally means extensive, abounding, far-reaching. It implies that Allah's ownership is extensive and all-pervading and every direction belongs to Him.

He is All-knowing too; therefore, He knows what your aim and intention is, no matter whichever direction you turn your face to. He is not like human beings or other creatures – if we want to see some physical object, we have to turn to a particular direction in order to bring it into focus. But Allah is not confined to a particular direction; turn to any direction, you are turning to Allah, and Allah knows it.

The verse gives a latitude about the *qiblah*, as far as its directions is concerned, but not apropos its location as may be inferred from the clause, “And Allah's is the East and the West”, inasmuch as it mentions the directions only.

Traditions

Muhammad ibn al-Husayn said: "It was written to al-'Abdu 's-Salih: 'A man prays in a cloudy day in an open space and he does not know the (direction of) *qiblah*, he prays; and when he has finished his prayer, the sun appears and (he finds that) he had prayed against *qiblah*. Should he regard his prayer (as valid) or should he repeat it?'

He wrote: 'He should repeat it if the time (of prayer) is not over. Does he not know that Allah says – and His word is true: ***therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face?***' (at-Tahdhib)

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allah: ***And Allah's is the East and the West...***: "Allah has revealed this verse especially for the voluntary prayer; ***therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.***

And the Apostle of Allah prayed on his camel by making gestures (for the actions of the prayer) wherever it turned to, when he proceeded to Khaybar, and also when he returned from Mecca – and the Ka'bah was behind his back." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: al-'Ayyashi has narrated another tradition of nearly the same meaning through Zurarah from as-Sadiq (a.s.); and so have done al-Qummi and ash-Shaykh from Abu 'l-Hasan (a.s.) and as-Saduq from as-Sadiq (a.s.).

If you study the traditions of the Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt*, related to the exegesis of the Qur'anic verses – the general and the particular; the unconditional and the conditional – you will see that often they infer one rule from the general verse, and another rule from the same when read together with the particular one.

For example, the general verse implies a voluntary rule; but read with the particular one it promulgates an obligatory law. The same applies to the cases of disliked and forbidden things. And so on.

The above is a key factor in understanding the traditions narrated from the Imams; and on it depends the knowledge of a multitude of their traditions.

You may infer from it two important principles of the Qur'anic knowledge:

First: Every Qur'anic clause or sentence, taken alone, describes an established reality or rule; when it is joined to another revealed qualifying clause, it indicates another reality or rule; add to it another qualification or condition and you get a third set of confirmed reality or law; and so on. For example, look at the verse:

Say: "Allah; then leave them sporting in their vain discourses" (6:91).

It indicates four separate meanings depending on the word we stop at: First, "Say: Allah"; second, "Say:

Allah; then leave them”; third, “Say: Allah; then leave them in their vain discourses”; fourth, “Say: Allah, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses”. Many such examples may be found in the Qur'an.

Second: If two stories or two themes are joined in one sentence or clause, both of them must be having a common base.

These two esoteric principles of exegesis open the way to many Qur'anic secrets – and Allah is the true Guide.

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