

Section 6: Fight in Self-Defence Permitted

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 39

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ

39. “To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) for they have been oppressed, and verily Allah is well able to assist them.”

Holy war is not permissible without the leave of Allah and the Messenger of Allah (S); and, thus, the oppressed are allowed to fight against their enemies, but with the leave of Allah and His Messenger (S).

When the Muslims were in Mecca, the polytheists always hurt them. So, some of the Muslims frequently came to the Prophet (S) while they had been beaten, and their heads were broken.

They complained of the circumstances (and asked for the permission of Holy Struggle), but the Prophet (S) told them to be patient, because he had not received the command of Holy Struggle yet.

Thereafter, the migration began and the Muslims came from Mecca to Medina when Allah sent down this verse containing the leave of Holy Struggle, which was the first verse revealed about the Holy War for the Muslim.

In the previous verse it was mentioned that Allah promised to defend the believers.

In this verse, the Qur'an says:

“To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) for they have been oppressed...”

Then, the holy Qur'an has completed this permission by the promise of victory from the side of Allah, the

Almighty, where it says:

“...and verily Allah is well able to assist them.”

We must utilize what we have in our possession in this world where the means are used, as far as we can, and when our ability ends we may wait for the help of Allah. This was the same thing that the Prophet (S) used to apply in all his struggles and finally he was victorious.

There is a discussion among the commentators whether this verse was the first commandment for the beginning of the Holy Struggle. The majority of the commentators consider it as the first holy verse of the Holy Struggle, while some others believe that verse No. 190 from Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2 was the first verse, which says:

“And fight in the cause of Allah (against) those who fight you...”

and some other Islamic commentators believe that verse 111 from Surah Al-Taubah, No. 9 was the first verse concerning the Holy Struggle, which says:

“Verily Allah has bought from the believers their souls and their properties...”¹

But the tone of the above verse rather appropriates for this matter, because the Qur’anic word /’uḡīna/ has explicitly been mentioned in the verse under discussion, while those two verses are lacked of it. In other words the expression of this verse is single in kind.

However, according to many Islamic narrations this verse has been rendered into the Holy Prophet (S) and Amir-al-Mu’mineen (as); and in some into the Imams (as); and, finally, in some into Hadrat Gha’m (as).

And, we have frequently said that the narrations denote to the commentary statement for the full denotation expansion and this very variation in narrations is a witness to this claim and does not contrast to the generality of the verse.²

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 40

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ
بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفُتَّتْ صَوَامِعُ وَيَعُوقَاتُ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

40. “(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes without right, except that they say: ‘Our Lord is Allah’. And had Allah not repelled some people by others, certainly there would

have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and the mosques in which Allah's name is much mentioned; and verily Allah will help him who helps Him (His cause); for verily Allah is Strong, Mighty."

Vagrancy from home is one of the clearest examples of being oppressed. Patriotism is the natural right of every human being, and expelling from one's home is deprivation of this right and it is a cause for injustice.

This verse explains more about these oppressed ones who have been given the permission of defence, and it makes the logic of Islam more clear regarding this part of the Holy Struggle.

The verse says:

"(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes without right, except that they say: 'Our Lord is Allah'..."

It is quite evident that the confession to monotheism and Oneness of Allah is an honour, not a sin. This confession was not something that might let the polytheists consider a right for themselves to expel them from their home and to force them to migrate from Mecca to Medina, but this is a tender expression which is usually used for condemning the opposite party in such instances.

Imam Baqir (as) says:

*"This verse has been revealed about the emigrants and it is also applied about the progeny of Muhammad (S), because they were expelled from their home, too, and were frightened."*³

Then, the Qur'an points to one of the philosophies of the religious aspect of Holy Struggle as follows:

"...And had Allah not repelled some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and the mosques in which Allah's name is much mentioned;..."

Yet, if the faithful and zealous persons remain heedless and simply watch the destructive activities of the tyrants, despots and faithless cruel persons, so that they find the scene without any opponent, there will remain no effect from the temples and centers of Divine worship.

These places are the sites of awareness and sanctuaries are as battlefields, and a mosque works as a fortress against the self-interested ones. In principle, any invitation unto the theism is against the arrogant individuals who desire that people may worship them in the same manner that they worship Allah. That is why if they find an opportunity to act they may ruin all these centers of Divine worship.

This is one of the goals of the religious aspect of Holy Struggle and the leave for fight.

The Islamic commentators have stated differently about the difference between the meanings of the

Qur'anic words: /sawami'/ (cloisters), /biya'/ (churches), /salawat/ (synagogues) and /masajid/ (mosques). But that which seems more correct is that the Arabic word /sawami'/ is the plural form of /sauma'ah/ which means a place usually built outside the cities and far from populations for hermits, nuns, monks, and worshippers. This is called /deyr/ in Persian.

The Arabic word /biya'/ is the plural form of /biy'ah/ which means a Christian temple. It is also called /kanisah/ (a synagogue) or /kelisa/ (a church).

The Arabic word /salawat/ is the plural form /salat/ which means the temple of the Jews. Some lexicologists believe that it is the Arabicized form of the word /salua/ which in Hebrew means oratory.

The Qur'anic word /masajid/ is the plural form /masjid/ in the sense of Muslims' temple.

Therefore, the places of /sawami'/ and /biya'/ both belong to the Christians, yet one of these two is a public temple and the other is the name of the center of the hermits. Some of the philologists also believe that the word /biya'/ is a common word used for both the temples of the Jews and the churches of the Christians.

By the way, the Qur'anic sentence which says:

"...in which Allah's name is much mentioned..."

apparently is a qualification particular to mosques since, regarding the five times prayers which are kept up during the days of the entire year, the Muslims' mosques are the most lively centers of worship in the world, while many other temples are used only one day in a week, or some days during the year.

At the end of the verse, the Holy Qur'an reiterates the divine help once again, where it says:

"...and verily Allah will help him who helps Him (His cause);..."

No doubt, this promise of Allah will be fulfilled, because He is strong, mighty and never fails.

The verse says:

"...for verily Allah is Strong, Mighty."

Allah says this in order that the defenders of the line of Monotheism might not think that they are alone in the field of struggling right against wrong, and before the crowd of obstinate enemies.

It was under the light of this very Divine promise that the defenders in the cause of Allah, at the advent of Islam, frequently won the battle when they were fighting in the battle-fields against the enemies while, comparing them with the number of their enemies, they were in minority from the point of soldiers, equipments, and other means of fighting.

They were so victorious that it cannot be explained save that we say it was done through the way of Allah's help and assistant.

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 41

الَّذِينَ إِن مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

41. “Those who, if We establish them in the land, perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and enjoin good and forbid evil, and unto Allah belongs the end of (all) affairs.”

If the righteous persons have the power and potentialities in their possession, they usually utilize them correctly, but if they are in the possession of some inept ones, they often misuse them.

Therefore, the means of the world and power are as some blessings for some groups of people, while they are the means of misery for others. So, the Qur'an refers to both of them.

It implies that if the believers gain power and ability, they will keep up prayer, pay the alms, enjoin good and forbid evil. But if the deviated and inept people become powerful, they disobey the truth:

“...Most surly man does transgress (all bounds)”⁴

and go along the way of destroying the economical sources of others as well as the annihilation of generations.

In this concern, the Qur'an, says:

“And when he turns back, he strives to cause mischief on the earth, and to destroy the tilth and the stock...”⁵

And, finally, they cause people to enter into Hell Fire:

“...Imams (who) call to the Fire...”⁶

However, this verse is an interpretation upon the friends of Allah whom have been promised the help of Allah in the previous verse.

It says:

“Those who, if We establish them in the land, perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and enjoin good and forbid evil...”

After being victorious, such believers never make themselves busy with luxuries, and libidinous pleasures, as the arrogant oppressors do, nor do they dive in pride and vanity. On the contrary, they utilize their victories and successions as a ladder for their promotion in improving both themselves and their own society.

They never change into a tyrant after obtaining power. Their relation with Allah is firm as well as with the servants of Allah, since prayer is the sign of having a link with Allah, and almsgiving is an indication to having a link with peoples; and enjoining good and forbidding evil are counted as the basic foundations of constructing a safe and sound society.

These very four qualities alone are enough for introducing such people. It is under the light of them all that other worships, righteous deeds and specialties of a believing and faithful progressed society can be provided.

It should be noted that the Qur'anic word /makkanna/ is derived from /tamkin/ and this means 'to supply the means and equipments' irrespective of the necessary tools, sufficient knowledge and awareness, as well as the physical and mental abilities.

The Qur'anic word /ma'ruf/ means 'some good and right actions', while the word /munkar/ means 'ugly and wrong deeds'; since the former has been provided for any purified person and the latter is unknown. In other words, the first one is adapted to the man's nature, but the second is not.

Thus, at the end of the verse, the Qur'an says:

"...and unto Allah belongs the end of (all) affairs."

This phrase means: as the beginning of all powers and victories is from the side of Allah, the end of all things returns to Him, too;

"Verily we belong to Allah and certainly unto Him shall we return."⁷

A Few Points

1. The Philosophy of the Holy War

We have formerly discussed expressively about this important subject, but regarding that these verses are perhaps the first group of the verses by which the permission of Holy War was issued for Muslims, and their content points out to the philosophy of this commandment, it seems necessary that we speak again about it.

In these holy verses, two important dimensions of the philosophy of Holy War have been referred to.

The first is the Holy Struggle of the oppressed against the cruel oppressors. This is a certain natural right for them, and the intellect approves that they should not accept injustice, but they must rise and protest,

equip themselves with weapon, remove the oppressors, and cut off their polluted hands from their rights.

Another kind is the Holy Struggle against false deities who intend to wipe out the name of Allah from the hearts and to destroy the temples which are among the centers of people's awareness.

This group should also be opposed so that they cannot efface the remembrance of Allah (s.w.t.) from the minds and, consequently, they stupefy people in order to make them some slaves and servants for themselves.

This matter is also noteworthy that: destroying temples and mosques is not only this action that they ruin them down by means of destruction and machines, but it is possible that they work indirectly and prepare some evil amusing things and ill propagations that they cause to divert common people from temples and mosques and, thus, these sacred places may be practically turned into some ruins.

Therefore, by what was said in the above, the answer of some objectors is made clear, those who say: why has Islam allowed Muslims to gain their goals by attaching force and war? Why do they not work for the Islamic aims by applying logic?

Is it possible that merely by using reasoning and logical statements the oppressed stand against the cruel tyrants who expel them from their houses, confiscate their properties, and observe no law and logic under the pretext that the oppressed say: *'There is no god but Allah'*?

Can these mad and illogical oppressors be faced without the language of weapon?

This is just like that they say: "Why do you and Israel not sit at a table for agreement with Israel, the usurper?" The same Israel who has been heedless unto international laws and warnings, and unto the decisions of the worldly organizations which are accepted by all nations, as well as the whole religious and humane laws? Does such a one comprehend logic and negotiation?

Is Israel, under whose unjust fiery bombards thousands of thousand innocent children, old women and men, and even the sick persons of the hospitals turned into pieces and were burnt, such a one to whom must be spoken logically?

Also, there are some persons who do their best to destroy the temples and the mosques that are the causes of awareness and movement of people when they see they are against their unlawful interests. Are such persons suitable to discuss with through a peaceful way?

However, if we put the present realities of the human societies under consideration, we will convince ourselves that, in some instances, there is no way save attaching to gun and force.

This is not because of the disability of logic, but it is because of the absence of the preparedness of the tyrants for the acceptance of right logic. There is no doubt that wherever logic is effective the right of priority is to it there.

2. Whom Has Allah Promised to Help?

This is a wrong consideration that the promise of victory and Allah's help as well as the defence from the believers, mentioned in the above verses and other verses of the Qur'an, are outside the laws of life and the course of creation. Nay, it is not such. Allah has given this promise only to those who utilize all their abilities and are active in the scene.

That is why in interpretation of the abovementioned verses, the Qur'an says:

"...And were Allah not to repel by means of other people, the earth would certainly be full of mischief;..."⁸

Therefore, Allah does not repel the vice of the oppressors only by the unseen powers and the power of thunderbolt and earthquake (save some exceptional instances), but He repels their vice by the true believers, and only these are those whom Allah does support with His help.

Therefore, the promises of Allah not only should not cause the heedlessness of some individuals concerning the burden of responsibilities, but it must also be the source of further encouragements, movements and activities in them; and, of course, it is in this case that the victory has been guaranteed for them from the side of Allah.

By the way, these believers do not refer to Allah only before their victory, but they also make firm their relation to Him after their victory, and they use of the victory against the enemy as a means for the spread of right, justice and virtue, as the Qur'an says:

"Those who, if We establish them in the land, perform the prayer..."

In some Islamic narrations, the above holy verse has been rendered into Hadrat Mahdi (as) and his companions, or into Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) in general.

A tradition from Imam Baqir (as), upon the commentary of the holy phrase:

"Those who, if We establish them in the land...",

said:

*"This verse, up to the end of it, belongs to the progeny of Muhammad (S) and Mahdi (as) and his companions. Allah will bestow them the East and the West of the earth (in their governmental authority) and will make religion manifest, and by Mahdi (as) and his companions He will annihilate innovation and falsehood, as evil ones had annihilated the truth, so much that there will not be seen any injustice (on the earth) for they enjoy the good and forbid the wrong."*⁹

There are also some other traditions on this regard, but, as we have repeatedly said these traditions state some clear examples of the meaning of the verse and they do not hinder the generality of its

concept. Thus, the vast meaning of the verse envelops all the believers, strivers, and challengers.

3. The Righteous, the Humble, and the Helpers of Allah

Through the abovementioned verses and the verses before them, somewhere He commands the Prophet (S) to give glad tidings to the righteous, the good doers (Muhsinin),¹⁰ and then He introduces them as those who have Faith and are not treacherous and ungrateful.

Somewhere in the Qur'an He refers to the humble ones (Mukhbitin) and explains them as those who, when mentioning Allah, tremble heartily, and are patient under that which afflicts them and they establish prayer and spend in charity out of whatever good Allah has provided them with.¹¹

Then, finally, the qualities of the helpers of Allah are explained, as that: at the time of victory they do not pave the way of disobedience, but they establish prayers and pay the alms, enjoin good and forbid evil.¹²

The totality of these verses shows that, from one side, the true believers, who are qualified with these attributes, are very strong in faith and in feeling responsibility, and, on the other side, they are very steadfast and practical from the point of action in the aspects of relation with Allah and the servants of Allah as well as struggling against corruption.

4. What is 'Right' and What is 'Wrong'?

The Arabic word /ma'ruf/ is derived from /'arafa/ and it philologically means 'known', while the term /munkar/ is derived from /'inkar/ and means 'unknown'.

Thus the 'good deeds' are some known things, while the wrong and indecent actions have been introduced as some unknown affairs, whereas the man's nature is acquainted with the first group and it is unacquainted with the second group.

Now, someone may ask:

"Is enjoining good an intellectual duty, or it is devotional?"

Some Islamic scholars believe that these two duties, as obligatory, have been proved only by traditional evidence, and intellect does not command that a person hinders another one from doing an evil deed the harm of which returns only to the same one himself.

However, regarding the social relations and that no indecent deed in the society stops in a particular point, but on the contrary, whatever it may be, it can, like fire, reach other points harmfully, and thus these two duties are recognized as intellectual.

In other words, there is not anything found in the society under the title of 'personal harm', and every 'personal harm' may change into the form of 'a social harm'. That is why both logic and intellect allow the

individuals of the society not to stop effort and endeavour in purifying their own environment from any pollution.

Some Islamic traditions have also pointed to this matter. It has been narrated from the holy Prophet (S), who said:

“The parable of a sinful person among people is like someone who embarks a ship with some others. So, when the ship is in the middle of the sea, he takes an ax and cuts a hole where he is sitting. Whenever he is protested, he answers that he is occupying his own share.

So, if others do not stop him of doing this dangerous deed, it does not take long that, by penetrating the sea water into the ship, everybody drowns in the sea.”

By this interesting example, the holy Prophet (S) has illustrated the duty of enjoining right and forbidding wrong as being logical, and he has also counted the right of personal control over the society as a natural right which originates from the relationship of the fates.

5. The Importance of Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong

In addition to the numerous verses of the Holy Qur'an, there are many proper traditions recorded in Islamic sources concerning the importance of these two great social duties. They have pointed to the dangers and evil sequels that may appear in the society as the result of abandoning these two duties.

Here are some examples:

1. Imam Baqir (as) says:

“Verily the act of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong are (two) great commandments by which other divine commandments may be established and (by which) the ways can become secured and the transactions (of people) become lawful, and the rights of persons can be safeguarded, and the lands may become flourished, and the enemies may be revenged, and (under their shade) all affairs will become straightened.”¹³

2. The holy Prophet (S) said:

“Whoever enjoins right and forbids wrong he is the viceroy of Allah on the earth, the viceroy of the messenger of Allah (S) and the viceroy of His Book.”¹⁴

It is clearly understood from this tradition that this great commandment, before anything else, is a Divine program, and the appointment of the prophets and sending the heavenly Books are all parts of this program.

3. Once a man came to the Prophet (S), while he was sitting on the pulpit, and asked him:

“Who is the best of people?”

The Prophet (S) said:

“The one among them who enjoins right and forbids wrong more than others; and is of the most virtuous people and tries to gain the pleasure of Allah more than others.”¹⁵

4. Another tradition narrated from the Prophet (S) indicates that he said:

“You should enjoin right and forbid wrong else Allah will dominate over you a cruel ruler who neither respects the old ones nor does he have mercy upon the children. Your righteous ones pray but it will not be answered, and they ask Allah for help but He will not help them; they even repent and Allah may not forgive their sins.”¹⁶

These are all the natural reactions of the deeds of the people who do not fulfil this great social duty, for without a general control, the process of the affairs will not remain in the hand of the righteous ones and the vicious ones will occupy the social positions.

When the above holy tradition denotes that their repentance will not be accepted, it is because their repentance is usually accompanied with their silence before the corruptions therein, and it does not have a right concept, except that they reform their programs.

5. Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

“All virtuous deeds totally, including even the Holy war in the way of Allah, comparing with enjoining right and forbidding wrong, is like a small amount of saliva in a deep ocean.”¹⁷

All these emphasizes are for the sake that these two great duties are, in fact, as a surety of execution of other individual and social duties and are considered as their soul, so that when they are absent all the commandments and ethical principles will lose their value.

6. Does Enjoining Right Negate Freedom?

In answer to this question, it should be said that social life certainly contains so many advantages and blessings, and even this kind of advantages have caused man to live socially, yet there are some limitations in it, too.

The harms of these few disadvantages of limitations comparing the abundant benefits of social life are so little that mankind accepted them for the social life from the early days.

And, in view of the fact that in the social life the fate of individuals relates to each other, and the members of a society affect the fates of others, the right of controlling others' deeds is a natural right and it is the peculiarity of social life.

This meaning was mentioned through the tradition which was formerly narrated from the Prophet (S). Thus, performing this obligatory duty not only does not contradict with personal freedom, but it is also a duty that individuals must observe mutually.

7. Does Enjoining Right Produce Anarchy?

Another question is that the interference of all people in the social affairs and controlling the deeds of each other causes disorder, confusion and different conflicts in the society, which opposes the division of the duties and responsibilities in the society.

In answer to this problem we say that: through former discussions this fact was made clear that the process of enjoining right and forbidding wrong has two stages. The first stage, which has a general aspect, consists of a limited scope of action.

It is not more than beyond admonition, advice, protest, criticism, and the like. Admittedly, in a lively society all the members must have such a responsibility against the corruptions.

The second stage, which is peculiar to a particular group and is counted among the authorities of the Islamic government, has a very vast scope of power.

That is, in the circumstances necessitate some violence in action, and even retaliation and execution of punishments, this group has the authority of action under the view of Islamic judge and the responsible persons of the Islamic government.

Thus, regarding the different stages of enjoining right and forbidding wrong, and their limits and rules, not only there will not appear any anarchy in the society, but also the society will change from a dead and listless state into a lively one.

Enjoining Right is Separate from Rudeness

At the end of this discussion, it is necessary to mention the fact that in doing this obligatory duty and invitation unto the right and striving against corruption, sympathy, piety in aim, and good opinion should not be neglected, and, except for some necessary instances, always the peaceful ways must be used. The performance of this duty should not be taken equal with rudeness.

But, unfortunately at the time of doing this duty, some persons act with harshness while it is not from the necessary instances, and sometimes they use some ugly and indecent words. So, we see that such kinds of enjoining right not only leave not a good effect, but also end to an opposite result.

The way of manner of the Prophet (S) and the immaculate Imams (as) shows that they mingled those two duties with much love and affection when they were executing them; and it was why the most obstinate ones submitted them soon.

The Commentary of Al-Manar, upon the interpretation of this verse narrates that:

Once a young man came to the Prophet (S) and said:

“O’ Messenger of Allah! Do you let me adulterate?”

When he said this, people shouted and, from here and there, they protested him. But the Prophet (S) coldly and calmly said:

“Come nigh, O’ man!”

The young man approached and sat in front of the holy Prophet (S) who kindly asked him whether he liked that his mother might be treated like that.

The young man answered:

“No. May I be your ransom!”

He (S) said:

“Similarly, people are not contented that their mother might be treated like that.”

Again he (S) asked him whether he liked that his daughter might be treated like that, when he replied the same answer. Then he (S) said again that similarly people were not contented that their daughters might be treated like that.

The Prophet (S) asked him:

“What about your sister?”

The young man denied again (and he became utterly regretful of his question). Then, the Prophet (S) put his hand on the youth’s chest and prayed for him.

He said:

“O’ Allah! Purify his heart, forgive his sin, and keep him safe from being polluted with indecency.”

From then on, the most hatred thing with that young man was adultery. And, this was the consequence of mildness and kindness of the Prophet (S) when forbidding the wrong.

Surah Al-Hajj – Verses 42 – 44

وَإِنْ يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودُ

وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمِ لُوطٍ

وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ وَكُذِّبَ مُوسَى فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتَهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ

42. “And if they belie you (O’ Prophet) then already before them did the people of Noah and ‘Ad and Thamud belie (prophets),”

43. “And the people of Abraham and the people of Lot,”

44. “And the dwellers of Midian; and Moses was (also) belied, but I gave respite to the disbelievers, then I did seize them, so how (severe) will be My punishment (of them).”

The rejection of the enemies should not be taken as a barrier for the continuation of the right way.

The history of the nations must be used for admonition and discipline.

The verse under discussion, from one side, consoles the holy Prophet (S) and the believers, and, on the other side, makes the bad end of the disbelievers clear.

At first, in order to tell the Prophet (S) not to be sad, it says:

“And if they belie you (O’ Prophet) then already before them did the people of Noah and ‘Ad and Thamud belie (prophets),”

“And the people of Abraham and the people of Lot,”

Then, the Holy Qur’an continues saying:

“And the dwellers of Midian; and Moses was (also) belied...”

As these oppositions and rejections did not cause the great prophets to become weakened in their call unto Monotheism, right, and justice, they will certainly not affect your steadfast, pure soul, either.

In the meanwhile, these blind hearted disbelievers should not imagine that they can continue their shameful programs for ever. As the Qur’an implies, Allah did respite the rejecters in order that they would have enough time to be examined, and the argument be completed to them, while they were enjoying blessings of Allah abundantly.

Then they were seized by the Divine punishment when they were in negligence. The verse continues implying that: you saw how severely Allah rejected their evil deeds and showed them the ugliness of their actions.

He took those blessings from them and gave them misery and wretchedness. He (s.w.t.) seized their life

and gave them death instead; so how will be the punishment which is unknown and ambiguous to them and they cannot understand its depth?

The verse says:

“...but I gave respite to the disbelievers, then I did seize them, so how (severe) will be My punishment (of them).”¹⁸

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 45

فَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَيَبْرُ مُعْطَلَةٌ
وَقَصْرٍ مَّشِيدٍ

45. “So how many of townships We did destroy while they were unjust, and (their walls) have fallen down over their roofs, and (how many a) well abandoned and (even) lofty castles (ruined).”

Allah’s Wrath upon the unjust and oppressors is not an event, but it is a course. When the punishment of Allah comes forth, there will resist neither any ceilings nor any pillars in the buildings.

The Qur’anic word /xawiyah/ is derived from /xawa’/ which means ‘to fall ruin’; and the word /mašid/ means both ‘a lofty castle’ and ‘a stucco-plastered castle’.

In the previous verse, the punishment of Allah was referred to in a general manner. Now it has been explained widely in this verse.

It says:

“So how many of townships We did destroy while they were unjust, and (their walls) have fallen down over their roofs...”

This statement means that the intensity of the event was so serious that at first the roofs fell down and then the walls of the buildings fell down over the roofs.

Then, the verse continues implying that there were many good wells with enough water that remained useless and the owners of which were annihilated and their water sank into the earth. Neither their water was pulled out, nor could any thirsty one satiated with it.

It says:

“...and (how many a) well abandoned...”

And there were also so many splendid castles and very high buildings with beautiful stucco-plaster-ornaments which ruined, and their owners perished.

The holy verse, hinting this fact, continues saying:

“...and (even) lofty castles (ruined).”¹⁹

Thus, both their beautiful and firm residences remained ownerless, and the sources of water which caused their lands to be flourishing, vanished.

It is noteworthy that some Islamic traditions, narrated from Ahl-ul-Bayt (as), indicate that the phrase:

“...and (how many a) well abandoned...”

has been rendered into the scholars and learned men who have been left alone in the society and no one takes any benefit from their knowledge.

Imam Musa-ibn-Ja'far (as), upon the commentary of the last sentence of the abovementioned verse, said that the 'well abandoned', which is not taken benefit from, is the silent Imam; and the 'lofty castle' is the 'rational Imam'.

A tradition with the same content has also been narrated from Imam Sadiq (as).²⁰

This commentary, in fact, is a kind of simile, (as Hadrat Mahdi (as), and his worldly justice, has been likened to 'a flowing water'), and it means that when Imam (as) is settled in the governmental position, he is like a firm high castle that attracts the eyes from near and far distances, and he is a shelter for all.

But, when he (as) is kept aloof from the position of government and people go far from around him, in a manner that some evil doers occupy his position, he is like a well full of water which has been left forgotten. Neither the thirsty people enjoy it, nor are the trees, plants and tilths watered by it.

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 46

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

46. “Have they not traveled in the land so that they should have hearts wherewith to understand (the truth), or ears wherewith to hear (the truth)? For verily blind are not the eyes but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.”

The experimental and scientific voyages are some worthy things which lead to the way of development

of knowledge,

“Have they not traveled...?”

The reason is that the land and periods are like some classes of learning; so, those who do not take examples from them are worthy of being blamed.

Worse than the blindness of eyes is the blindness of hearts which do not obtain their insight by advice and admonition.

“...blind are the hearts...”

Yes, persistence in obstinacy and hostility against the Truth naturally transforms man and takes him to a point where he can recognize the Truth neither by his intellect nor by his eyes and ears.

The words in former verses were about the unjust cruel people whom were punished Divinely for their wrong actions and their cities and dwellings were destroyed.

Now, in this verse, as an emphasis on this matter, the Qur'an says:

“Have they not traveled in the land so that they should have hearts wherewith to understand (the truth), or ears wherewith to hear (the truth)?...”

Yes, the ruined castles of the tyrants and destroyed houses of the oppressors, who once used to live in the highest degree of power, with their mute tongue, each delivers thousands of points while they are silent.

These ruins are some expressive and alive books which explain the history of these nations; the explanations about the consequences of their deeds, and about their shameful evil programs and, finally, about their painful chastisement.

These silent lands and the traces remained in the ruins, may cast such an exciting mood in the man's mind that, sometimes, the study of one of them teaches man some amount of matter as much as the study of a thick book, and, regarding the repetition of history, which is the fundamental principle of men's lives, illustrates the future before him.

Verily, the study of the works of the people of old makes the ears hearing and the eyes seeing. It may be for this very reason that, by numerous verses of the Qur'an, man has been commanded to travel in the world.

This traveling must be godly and ethical, so that whatever one sees causes him to awake him and he takes a lesson and new advices from those ancient traces, such as: 'Eywan-i-mada'in, the ruined palaces of the tyrant kings and the castles of Pharaohs.

Then, in order to make the reality of this speech more clear, the Qur'an implies that there are many persons who are not apparently blind or deaf, but they are indeed blind and deaf, because it is not the outward eyes which become blind but it is their hearts which lose their insight.

The holy verse continues saying:

"...For verily blind are not the eyes but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts."

In fact, those who lose their apparent eyes are not blind and sometimes they are some enlightened persons who are more aware than others. The true blind are those whose hearts are blind and do not perceive the Truth.

The holy Prophet (S) in a tradition said:

"The worst blindness is the blindness of the heart."

And

"The utmost blindness of the blindness is the blindness of the heart." 21

Another narration, recorded in the book entitled:

"Qawali-yul-La'ali", indicates that the Prophet (S) said:

*"When Allah intends to do a favour to a servant, He causes the eye of his heart to open by which he can see whatever was concealed to him."*22

We know that man's heart is merely a pump for the circulation of the blood; then how have the hearts in the breasts been attributed to comprehending the facts? The answer to this question has been explained vastly in Al-Mizan, vol. 14, pp. 392-393 and Tafsir-i-Nimunah, vol. 1, Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 7, the shortened of which is as follows:

One of the meanings of the Qur'anic word /qalb/ (heart) is 'wisdom', and one of the meanings of the Arabic word /sadr/ (chest) in the Qur'an is 'the essence and nature of man'.

Moreover, the heart is the symbol of man's affections, and whenever something of affections, which is often the origin of movement, appears in the spirit of man, its first effect affects on his very physical heart; the pulsation of the heart changes, the blood reaches all parts and particles of the body which gives it a new joy and power.

Therefore, when the spiritual moods are attributed to the heart, it is because their first place of appearance in the man's body is his heart.

It is interesting that in the abovementioned verse, all man's perceptions have been attributed to the heart

(wisdom) and ears.

This implies that for comprehending the facts, there are only two ways; either man must have something from his own and in his own spirit by which he personally analyses the matters and gets the necessary results; or he should listen to the advice of the kind advisers, the guides of the way, the Divine prophets and the men of the truth, or he can utilize both of them to obtain the facts.²³

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 47

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ

47. “And they demand of you to hasten on the punishment! While does never Allah fail His promise; and verily a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number.”

The Divine prophets (as) used to warn the disbelievers of the Divine punishment but they frequently asked the prophets what time would the punishment of Allah come? This verse answered them not to hasten, since the promise of Allah is certain. So, we should not consider the respite of Allah as a sign for His negligence or that we are delivered.

In this verse, the Qur’an makes manifest another feature of the ignorance and unawareness of the blind-hearted pagans.

It says:

“And they demand of you to hasten on the punishment! While does never Allah fail His promise;...”

The person who fears that he might lose the opportunity he has, and his potentialities end, usually hastens. But as for Allah, Who has been All-Powerful over everything since pre-eternity and will be the same until post-eternity, He is always able to fulfil His promises and haste is meaningless for Him.

There is no difference for Him whether time is one hour, one day or one year.

Its reason is mentioned in the verse, where it says:

“...and verily a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number.”

Thus, whether sincerely or mockingly the disbelievers reiterate this statement, saying: ‘Why the Divine punishment does not come down over them’, they should know that the Divine chastisement waits for

them and, soon or late, it will come to them.

So, if there is a respite given to them, it is for that they may awake and improve themselves. Yet, they must be careful that after the punishment has been sent down, the doors to repentance and return are totally closed and there is no way to escape.

Concerning the Qur'anic sentence which says:

"...verily a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number",

besides the abovementioned commentary which indicates one day and a thousand days are indifferent for the Power of Allah, there have been mentioned some other commentaries, too.

Among them is that you may need one thousand years for doing something, but Allah's performance is in one day (or less than that). Hence, His punishment does not need so many premises.

Another matter is that: in comparison, one day in the Hereafter is like one thousand years in the world, (and its reward and retribution will also be increased with the same scale).

An Islamic narration indicates:

*"Verily the poor will enter Paradise before the rich in half a day (which is) five hundred years."*²⁴

Surah Al-Hajj – Verse 48

وَكَايِّنَ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أُمَلِّيتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا وَإِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

48. "And how may of townships I did give a respite while (the people therein) were unjust, then I did seize them, and unto Me is the return (of all)."

One of Allah's ways of treatment is His respite given to the unjust. Thus, our haste is useless.

In this verse, the same subject which was emphasized on in the former verses is emphasized once again, and the obstinate pagans are warned as follows:

"And how may of townships I did give a respite while (the people therein) were unjust, then I did seize them..."

They also complained about the postponement of the Divine punishment, and mocked it. They counted it as a reason for the invalidity of the Prophets' promises, but, at last, they were seized by the punishment and their cries and wails remained in vain.

Yes, all of us return unto Him, and all lines end to Allah. All these properties and wealth will remain when the heir of all of them is Allah.

The verse continues saying:

“...and unto Me is the return (of all).”

-
1. Al-Mizan, vol. 14, P. 419
 2. Majma‘-ul-Bayan, Safi, Jawami‘-ul-Jami‘, Fakhr-i-Razi, Atyab-ul-Bayan.
 3. Tafsir-us-Safi, Majma‘-ul-Bayan, Burhan, and Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
 4. Surah ‘Alaq, No. 96, verse 6
 5. Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 205
 6. Surah Al-Qasas, No. 28, verse 41
 7. Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 156
 8. Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 251
 9. Tafsir-i-Ali-ibn-‘Ibrahim, according to Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 506
 10. The Current Surah, verse 37
 11. current Surah, verse 35
 12. The verse under discussion
 13. Wasa‘il-ush-Shi‘ah, vol. 11, p. 395, tradition 6
 14. Majma‘-ul-Bayan, on the commentary of this verse.
 15. Majma‘-ul-Bayan, the Commentary
 16. Ibid
 17. Nahjul-Balaqah, saying No. 374
 18. The Qur’anic word /nakir/ means /‘inkar/ (deniyance) and here it refers to the Divine punishment.
 19. The Arabic word /mašid/ is derived from /šid/ which has two meanings. The first is ‘height’ and the second is ‘plaster’. Then, taking the first meaning, the verse means ‘lofty high castles’ and by the second meaning, it means: ‘some castles which are built very firm to be safe from events.’
 20. Tafsir-Burhan, vol. 3, p. 30
 21. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 508
 22. Ibid, p. 509
 23. Taken from Al-Mizan, the Commentary, vol. 14, p. 392
 24. Majma‘-ul-Bayan, following the verse under discussion.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-10/section-6-fight-self-defence-permitted>