

In the previous verse (46), there was a description of the Jewish stance against Islam which ranged from flat denial to laboured falsification, something born out of the desire to misrepresent, alter and ridicule. The present verse addresses them directly and commands them to believe in the final revelation and demonstrate their confirmation. Should they continue ignoring the warning and remain hostile, they should really be concerned with the chilling prospects of what their fate would be as a consequence of their ill choice.

Commentary

Note 1: The Qur'ānic expression: فَتَوَدَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا (and turn them shaped like their backs) admits of two probabilities in this act of turning. It could either be that the features of the face are eliminated and the whole face is turned around towards the back; or, it may be that the face is flattened like the nape of the neck, devoid of all features, 'effaced.' (Mazharī, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Note 2: When will this be is a question posed and answered by Commentators in great details. Discussing this deconfiguration (*ṭams*) and transmutation (*maskh*), some of them have said that this punishment will come upon the Jews before the Day of Doom, while others have said that this punishment did not come to pass because some of the Jews had entered the fold of Faith.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī رحمه الله has said: 'In my opinion, that question simply does not arise because there is no single word in the Qur'ān which would suggest the proposition: If you do not believe, the punishment of *ṭams* and *maskh* will definitely materialize. In fact, it suggests probability, that is, given their crime, they do deserve this punishment, and should He spare them from the punishment, that would be His mercy.'

Verses 48 - 50

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ
 وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى
 الَّذِينَ يَزْكُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ ۖ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَزَكِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَا يَظْلَمُونَ
 فَتِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۖ وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ

إِنَّمَا مُبِينًا ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has tailored a great sin. [48]

Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whom He wills and they shall not be wronged even to the measure of a thread of a date-stone. [49] See how they fabricate a lie against Allah, and it is enough to be an open sin. [50]

The previous verse carried an admonition for those who refused to believe. But, from among those to whom this admonition has been addressed, some could finally be forgiven, which admits of the probability that all these other addressees may, perhaps, be also forgiven. Therefore, the text goes on to explain that this group of people will not be forgiven because of their *kufr* or disbelief. This also refutes the Jewish claim that they shall be forgiven.

Commentary

Shirk: A definition, and some forms

The words of the Qur'anic text in **إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ** (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him) demonstrate that the set articles of faith relating to the Being and Attributes of Allah Almighty are the *sine qua non* of religion and holding any belief similar to these in favour of whoever and whatever He has created is *shirk*. Some of the forms it takes are as follows:

Shirk in Knowledge: This is the ascribing of a partner to Allah in matters of knowledge (*ilm*), for example believing that a certain pious person or a spiritual master or the head of a mystical order knows about everything in this universe all the time. Other forms could be asking an astrologer or a fortune-teller or a diviner about things that are going to take place in a person's life, things which belong to the unseen world, an exclusive domain of Allah; or, to take omen (*fāl*) from the words written by a pious person and believing that it has got to happen; or, calling someone from a considerable distance and believing that the person has become all aware of the call; or, keeping a fast dedicated to someone other than Allah.

Shirk in Power: This is ascribing to others the powers and rights which are the exclusive domain of Allah as for example, taking someone to have the power and authority to provide gain or inflict loss. It includes things like asking someone to grant wishes or to ask for sustenance, and children.

Shirk in 'Ibādah: This means the ascribing of a partner to Allah in acts of worship (*Ibādah*) which is the sole due of Allah. Some of the forms it could take are to go down in *sajdah* (prostration) for anyone, to release an animal dedicated in the name of somebody, making ceremonious offering for a person or thing, living or dead, to make a vow (*mannat, nadhr*) in someone's name; to make *ṭawāf* (rounds, circumambulation) of someone's grave or house; to give preference to someone else's word, or custom, as against God's own command; to make bows before anyone in the manner of a *rukū'*, the bowing position peculiar to Muslim prayer; to slaughter an animal in the name of someone; to take the affairs of the mortal world as subservient to the effect and influence of stars; to regard some month as ill-omened, wretched; and things like that.

Indulgence in self-praise

Let us now turn to the word of Allah in: **أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ** (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves?) Since the Jews claimed sanctity for themselves, Allah Almighty censures them in this verse as a strange lot attributing sanctity to themselves and then having the audacity to tell others that this is so. Amazing indeed!

From here we learn that it is not permissible for anyone to claim and broadcast his or her sanctity, or that of others. This is forbidden on three counts:

1. The cause of self-praise is mostly pride and arrogance. So, in reality, what is forbidden is pride and arrogance.

2. As to the end of man, only Allah knows if it will come in a state of *Taqwā* and *Tahārah*, that is, in a state when one is still God-fearing spiritually and free from major and minor impurities physically. Therefore, claiming sanctity for oneself is contrary to being God-fearing. As such, Sayyidah Zaynab daughter of Abī Salamah رضى الله عنها narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked her: 'What is your name?' Since, at that time, her name was *Barrah* (which means pure

from sins), so, that was what she told him. He, then, said: **لَا تَزْكُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ، اللَّهُ** (Do not claim sanctity for yourselves (that is, do not claim purity and freedom from sins) because it is Allah alone who knows best as to who among you is of the righteous. He, then, named her Zaynab (instead of Barrah). (Mazhari)

3. The third reason for this prohibition is that such a claim gives people the false idea that the person making that claim is nearer to Allah because he is free of all faults, although this is a lie, for no mortal man is free of one or the other shortcoming. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Ruling: If impediments mentioned above do not exist, one can speak about one's trait of character as an expression of gratitude for Allah's blessing. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 51 - 52

لَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ
وَالطَّاغُوتِ وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا سَبِيلًا ﴿٥١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ
فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Have you not seen those who have been given a share from the Book? They believe in *Jibt*¹ and *Ṭaghūt*² and say concerning those who disbelieve, "They are better guided in their way than those who believe." [51] Those are the ones whom Allah curses, and the one whom Allah curses you shall find no helper for him. [52]

A description of the evil traits of Jews has been appearing from the previous verse beginning with: **لَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلَالََةَ - الع** (44). The present verses also deal with the same subject.

Commentary

What is *Jibt* and *Ṭaghūt*?

Two words, 'al-Jibt' and 'al-Ṭaghūt' have been mentioned in the present verse (51). What do they mean? Commentators have explained

1. *Jibt*: Originally, the name of an idol which was also used later on for every false god as well as for sorcery.
2. *Ṭaghūt*: Literally signifies the arrogant. It is also used for Satan, and for evil and falsehood.

it variously. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jubayr and Abū al-'Āliyah رضى الله عنهم have said that 'Jibt' comes from the Ethiopian language and refers to a magician while 'Ṭāghūt' signifies a soothsayer.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه says that 'Jibt' means magic and 'Ṭāghūt' means Satan. Sayyidnā Mālīk ibn Anas رضى الله عنه is reported to have said that everything worshipped other than Allah is covered by the name 'Ṭāghūt'.

Imām al-Qurtubī says that the view of Sayyidnā Mālīk ibn Anas رضى الله عنه, being more inclusive, is generally preferred because it also has its support from the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: *اِنَّ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطّٰغُوتَ* (Worship Allah and avoid Ṭāghūt.) (16:36) But, really, there is no contradiction as such in these different views. They all can be implied in one or the other sense, as Jibt was essentially the name of an idol after all, but it was later on that it came to be applied to other things and beings worshipped other than Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ārī)

The present verses in the background of their revelation

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه narrates that two chiefs of the Jews, Ḥuyayy ibn Akḥṭab and Ka'b ibn Ashraf came along with a group of theirs, after the battle of Uḥud, to meet the Quraysh at Makkah. The Jewish Chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf met Abū Sufyān and promised to collaborate with him in his fight against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The people of Makkah told Ka'b ibn Ashraf that they were a people who cheated by making false promises. Then, they challenged them to prostrate before two particular idols (Jibt and Ṭāghūt) there, if they really meant what they had said.

So, in order to assure the Quraysh, he did exactly that. After that, Ka'b told the Quraysh: 'Let thirty people from among you and thirty people from among us come forward so that we declare our resolve before the Lord of the Ka'bah that all of us will jointly fight against Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.'

The Quraysh liked this proposal from Ka'b and this was how they opened a united front against Muslims. After that, Abū Sufyān told Ka'b: 'You are learned people. You have the Book of Allah with you. But, we are totally ignorant. Now, you let us know what do you think about us - tell us if we are on the right path, or is it Muḥammad? ﷺ'

Ka'b asked: 'What is your religion?' Abū Sufyān said: 'We slaughter our camels for the Hajj. We offer their milk to pilgrims, and entertain guests. We maintain good relations with our kin. We make *tawāf* of the House of Allah and perform 'Umrah. Contrary to this, Muḥammad ﷺ has abandoned his ancestral religion and he has cut himself off from his own people and, on top of that, he has challenged our ancestral religion by introducing a new religion of his own.'

Hearing all this, Ka'b ibn Ashraf said: 'You people are on the right path. Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has gone astray.'

Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed these verses and, thus, exposed their lying and deceit. (Ruh al-Ma'āni)

The blind pursuit of material gains sometimes makes man surrender religion and faith

Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a distinguished scholar among the Jews. He believed in God and worshipped none but Him. However, when the ghost of overweening personal desires overpowered his mind and heart, he offered to join forces with the Quraysh against Muslims. As we already know, the Quraysh put forth the condition that he should prostrate before their idols. He swallowed this bitter pill to achieve his personal end. Here, we see that he squarely stooped to fulfil the condition imposed by the Quraysh, something contrary to his religion, but he made no effort to stand by his religious beliefs and did not show the courage to part ways with them on so crucial an issue. The Holy Qur'an mentions a similar incident elsewhere concerning Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr. It says: *وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنبَاءَ فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَ الشَّيْطَانَ فَأَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ* (Recite to them the news of the one who was given Our signs, then he eased out from it and followed the Satan, and he was one of those who seduce people to err.) (7:175)

Commentators say that Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr was a great scholar and a mendicant who wielded spiritual powers. But, when he launched his sinister plans against Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه الصلوة والسلام in an effort to achieve his personal desires, he was unable to achieve anything against him, but what did happen was that he himself ended up being accursed and went astray.

This tells us that religious knowledge as culled from a book is not

enough to guarantee the desired benefit. What is needed is action sought by the knowledge. This will not be possible unless one totally abstains from material greed and from the pursuit of carnal desires. Otherwise, man would not stay strong enough to resist against sacrificing something so dear as his religion on the altar of his desires. In our own time, we have the kind of people who would abandon their true creed just to achieve their material and political goals. Some of them would go for the extra effort to dress up their secular beliefs and views with the garb of Islam. Such people care less about the grave Covenant between God and man, nor do they worry much about what would happen to them in the *Ākhirah*. All this happens when one abandons his true and right creed and starts following the signals of the Satan.

The curse of Allah causes disgrace here and hereinafter

The Qur'ānic word, '*la'nah*' (translated as 'curse' in absence of a more exact equivalent) means being far removed from the mercy of Allah, extremely debased and disgraced. Anyone under '*la'nah*' from Allah cannot be close to Allah. For such accursed ones admonitions are very stern. The Holy Qur'ān says: **مَلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا نُفِئُوا أُجْدُوا وَاقْتُلُوا قَتِيلًا** (The accursed, wherever they be, are to be caught and killed massacre-like.) (33:61) This is their disgrace in the present life - the disgrace in the *Ākhirah* will be far too grim to contemplate.

Who deserves the '*la'nah*' of Allah?

The words of the Holy Qur'ān in verse 52: **وَمَنْ يَلْمِزِ اللَّهَ فَنَزَّ لَهُ نَصِيرًا** state that anyone under the curse of Allah has no helper to help him in that predicament. The point to ponder is: Who are these people who become deserving of this '*la'nah*' from Allah?

According to a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has cursed the giver of interest, the receiver and the consumer of interest, and its writer and the one who bears witness to it, the whole lot of them, all of them equally involved in the sin. (Narrated by Muslim as in *Mishkāṭ*)

There is another ḥadīth in which he said: **مَلْعُونٌ مَنْ عَمِلَ قَوْمَ لُوطٍ** (Cursed is he who does what the people of Lūt عليه السلام used to do). Narrated by Razīn and appearing in *Mishkāṭ*, the reference is to the male homosexual. Then, he said: 'Allah sends his curse on the thief who would not stop from stealing even very small things like eggs and

ropes, and in retribution to which, his hand is cut off.' (Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said:

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْبَايِعَ وَالْمُؤَكَّلَةَ وَالْمُتَوَشِّمَةَ وَالْمُصَوِّرَ

"Allah curses the eater of interest, and its feeder, and the woman who tattoos another woman and the woman who tattoos herself, and the picture-maker." (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

In yet another ḥadīth, he has said: 'Allah sends His curse on liquor, its consumer and its server, its seller and purchaser, its squeezers, its handlers, transporters and orderers, on all of them.' (Abu Dāwūd, ibn Mājah, from Mishkāt)

In still another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'There are six types of people I have cursed and Allah Almighty has also cursed them - and every prophet is blessed with the acceptance of his prayers - those six are:

- (1) One who commits excess in the matter of Allah's Book;
- (2) and one who rises to power by force and terror, then honours a person disgraced by Allah and brings disgrace on a person honoured by Allah;
- (3) the denier of destiny determined by Allah;
- (4) one who takes as lawful what has been made unlawful by Allah;
- (5) the person in my progeny who rules what has been forbidden as lawful;
- (6) and the one who gives up my way (*sunnah*). (Baihaqī in Al-Mudkhal from Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said: لَعَنَ اللَّهُ التَّاطِرَ وَالْمُنْتَظِرَ أَيُّهُ 'Allah curses the ogler and the ogled at.' It means that the curse of Allah falls on anyone who looks at someone in an evil way, someone who is a non-*Mahram*, that is, someone outside the count of those in the family he is permitted to see because marriage with them is forbidden for ever. This is why such a *nāzīr*, the onlooker of the other, comes under the curse of Allah. As for the *manzūr ilaihi*, the one who is looked at lustfully, the same curse will apply subject to his or her having deliberately and invitingly

caused such a look to be cast.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates:

لَعَنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّجُلَ يَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الْمَرْأَةِ، وَالْمَرْأَةَ تَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الرَّجُلِ

"The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has cursed the man who dresses like a woman and the woman who dresses like a man. (Mishkāt)

The following report from Abū Dawūd appears in Mishkāt:

عن عائشة رضى الله تعالى عنها أن امرأة تلبس النعل، قالت لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الرجل من النساء

"Someone told Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about a woman who wore (men's) shoes. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has cursed the woman who takes to masculine ways.'

A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه reports:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: لعن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المخنثين من الرجال، والمترجلات من النساء و قال اخرجوهم من بيوتكم (رواه البخارى بحواله مشكوة)

"The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has cursed the effeminate from among men (who, in dress and looks, emulate women-like transvestites) and he has cursed the masculinized from among women (who, in dress, looks and ways, act man-like). And he said: 'Expel them out of you homes.' " (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

Also from al-Bukhārī comes the report that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said:

لعن الله الواشمات والمستوشمات والمتنمصات والمتفلجات للحسن المغيرات خلق الله

"The curse of Allah be on the tattoopers and the tattooed, on the pickers of eye-brows and the cleavers of teeth as aids to beauty - they are the makers of alteration in the creation of Allah."

Rules about *La'nah*

La'nah is the denouncing of something or the calling down of evil on someone. 'Curse' is the most widely used equivalent for it. Two formal substitutes for 'curse' in this sense are 'execration' and 'imprecation'. 'Execration' is the face-to-face denunciation or the ill wished, while 'imprecation' is somewhat privately expressed. Call it by whatever name, the act of invoking '*La'nah*' is a terrible thing to do. Because of the amount of evil it releases, corresponding heavy restrictions have been placed against its use. Invoking *La'nah* against a Muslim is *ḥarām* (forbidden) and the sole condition when this can be done against a *kāfir* (disbeliever) is that the imprecator must be sure that the disbeliever will die clinging to his disbelief. Given below are some authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on this subject:

عن ابن مسعود قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ليس المؤمن بالطعان ولا باللعان ولا بالبذى (الترمذى بحواله مشكوة)

"According to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'A true Muslim is no taunter or imprecator, nor is he foul-mouthed.'" (Tirmidhī, from Mishkāt)

عن ابى الدرداء قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: إن العبد إذا لعن شيئاً سعدت اللعنة إلى السماء فتغلق ابواب السماء دونها، ثم تهبط إلى الارض فتغلق ابوابها دونها، ثم تاخذ يمينا وشمالاً، فإذا لم تجد مساعاً رجعت إلى الذى لعن فان كان لذلك اهلاً والا رجعت إلى قائمها (رواه ابو داؤد بحواله مشكوة)

"Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say : 'When a servant of Allah curses something, the curse goes up towards the sky whereupon the doors of the sky are closed on it. After that, it comes down towards the earth whereupon the doors of the earth are closed on it (that is, the earth does not accept this curse). After that, it takes a right, and then a left, but, as it finds no access anywhere, it returns to the one who was cursed. So, if he is really deserving of it, on him it falls; otherwise, it returns back to its pronouncer and falls on him.'" (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

عن ابن عباس ان رجلا نازعته الريح رداءه فلعنها فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تلعنها فانها مأمورة، وانه من لعن شيئاً ليس له بأهل رجعت اللعنة عليه . (رواه الترمذى بحواله مشكوة)

"It has been reported by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the wind swooped away the sheet-cloak of a man and he cursed the wind, whereupon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not curse it for it is under orders (from Allah) and (remember) whosoever curses something which does not deserve the curse, then, the curse returns to none but him.'" (Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt, p. 413)

Rulings:

1. Unless it is known about a particular person that he has died in a state of *kufr* (disbelief), invoking *La'nah* on him is not permissible - even though he may be a sinful person. Based on this principle, Allāmah Ibn 'Abidīn has advised against cursing Yazīd. But, should it be on a particular *kāfir* whose death in a state of disbelief is certain, for instance, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab, then, it is permissible. (Shāmī, v.2, p.836)

2. Cursing without naming anyone is permissible, for example, saying: 'God's curse upon liars (or tyrants)!'

3. Literally, *La'nah* means being far removed from the mercy of Allah. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, when applied to disbelievers, it refers to their being far far off from the mercy of Allah; and when it is applied to Muslims, it refers to their having fallen down the level of the righteous (reported by Shāmī from al-Quhistānī, v.2, p.836). Therefore, praying that the good deeds of a Muslim may decrease is also not permissible.

Verses 53 - 55

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Is it that they have a share in the kingdom, while in that case, they would give nothing to the people, not

even to the measure of a tiny pit on the back of a date-stone? [53]

Or, is it that they are jealous of people over what Allah has given them of His bounty while We have given to the House of Ibrāhīm the Book and the wisdom and We have given to them a great kingdom? [54]

So, there were some among them who believed in it and there were others among them who turned away from it. And enough (for the latter) is *Jahannam*, a fire ablaze! [55]

Linked with previous verses, the description of Jewish traits of character continues in the present verses as well.

Commentary

Admonishing Jews for being unreasonably envious

The knowledge, the grace, the high rank and the grandeur of mission given by Allah Almighty to the Noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made Jews all too jealous. Verses 53 and 54 strongly admonish this attitude of theirs, giving two reasons why their envy was unreasonable. The first reason appears in verse 53, while the second, in verse 54. But, the outcome of both is the same. The drift of the argument is: 'What is the basis of your envy? If this is because you think you are the real inheritors of the kingdom and what he has been blessed with is actually yours, obviously then, this is all wrong. As it is, right now you have no kingdom. Even if you came to have some of it, you are not the kind to give anything to anybody. If your envy is based on the realization that the kingdom, no doubt, did not pass from you onto him, still, the question remains, why did it have to go to him at all. What relevance does he have with having a kingdom? The answer given was: He too comes from the family of prophets who have ruled over kingdoms before him. So, the kingdom has really not come to a stranger. Your envy, therefore, is unreasonable.'

The definition and rules of envy

'Allāmah al-Nawawī, the Commentator of Muslim, defines *Hasad* as : *أَلْحَسَدُ تَمَنَّى زَوَالِ النِّعْمَةِ* (Muslim, v.2). It means that *Hasad* (envy) is a desire to see the other person's blessing somehow disappear, and this is *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

لا تباغضوا ولا تحاسدوا ولا تدابروا، وكونوا عباد الله اخواناً، ولا يحل
لمسلم ان يهجر اخاه فوق ثلاث .

"Do not hate and do not envy and do not turn your backs on each other. Instead, become servants of Allah, as brothers. And it is not lawful for a Muslim that he abandons his brother for more than three days." (Muslim, v.2)

In another ḥadīth, he has said:

اياكم والحسد، فإن الحسد يأكل الحسنات كما تاكل النار الحطب

"Beware of envy, for envy eats up good deeds as the fire eats up wood." (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

Sayyidnā Zubayr رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

عن الزبير رضى الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : داء
اليكم داء الامم قبلكم، الحسد والبغضاء هي الحالفة، لا أقول تحلق الشعر،
ولكن تحلق الدين

"Stealthily creeping into you is the disease of earlier peoples - envy; and hatred, which is a shaver. I do not say that it shaves hair, but it does shave the religion off." (Aḥmad and Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt)

Envy, whether it be on account of someone's worldly, or spiritual excellence, is ḥarām (forbidden) on both counts, as the words **أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ** (Is it that they have a share in the kingdom?) seem to point out towards worldly excellence, while the words **الْكَيْبِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ** (54) (the Book and the wisdom) are indicative of spiritual excellence.

Verses 56 - 57

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِمْ نَارًا كَلَّمًا نَضِجَتْ
جُلُودُهُمْ بِدَلْهِمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا
لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَوَدُخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Those who have disbelieved in Our verses, We shall certainly make them enter a fire. Whenever their skins are burnt out, We shall give them other skins in their place, so that they may taste the punishment. Surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [56]

As for those who have believed and have done good deeds, We shall admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, remaining there for ever, for them, there are wives purified. And We shall admit them to a shade ever-stretched. [57]

Particular believers and disbelievers were mentioned in the previous verses. Stated now is the reward and punishment of a believer and a disbeliever as a universal rule.

Commentary

Explaining the highly apocalyptic statement **كَلَّمَآ نَضَجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنَاهُمْ** in verse 56, Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضى الله عنه says that as soon as their skin is burnt out it will be replaced - and this will be with such speed that the skin will be replaced a hundred times in one moment.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says:

تاكل النار كل يوم سبعين الف مرة، كلما اكلتهم قيل لهم: عودوا
فيعودون كما كانوا (اخرج البيهقي عن الحسن بحواله مظهرى ج ٢)

"The fire will eat them everyday seventy thousand times. When it would have eaten them up, they will be commanded: 'Return'. So, they shall return to be as they were." (al-Baihaqi, as quoted by Maḥzarī)

According to a narration in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ان اهون اهل النار عذابا رجل فى
اخمص قدميه جمرتان يغلى منهما دماغه كما يغلى الرجل بالقمقم (رواه
البخارى و مسلم، بحواله الترغيب والترهيب ج ٤ ص ٢٣٩)

"Lightest in punishment among the people of fire will be the man in the sole of whose feet there will be two smouldering embers the heat from which will keep his brain boiling like a cauldron boiling to the brim." (Almundhiri, al-Tarḥīb v.4, p.239)

An explanation of 'purified wives'

According to Hākim, Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه narrated that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The women of *Jannah* will be pure, that is, pure from menstruation, defecation, urination and nasal mucus.

Mujāhid adds to the above by saying: 'They shall also be pure and free from procreation and seminal impurity.' (Mazharī)

Let us now look at the last two words: ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا in verse 57. Here, by mentioning ظليل after ظل it has been mentioned that the shade in *Jannah* will be dense and ever-present. This is like saying: شَمْسٌ شَامِسٌ or كَيْلٌ نَيْلٌ which indicate that the blessings of Paradise will last for ever.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

ان فى الجنة لشجرة يسير الراكب فى ظلها مائة عام ما يقطعها ، اقروا ان
شتمتم و ظل ممدود

"There is a tree in Paradise. If a rider were to ride under its shade for a hundred years, he will still not cross it. Read, if you wish, وَظِلٌّ مَمْدُودٌ (A shade, ever-extended, ever-stretched)."

Explaining ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا , Rabī' ibn Anas said:

هو ظل العرش الذى لا يزول

"That is the shade of the Throne (*al-'arsh*) which will never decline."

Verses 58 - 59

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ
وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ
فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٥٩﴾

Surely, Allah commands you to fulfil trust obligations

towards those entitled to them and that, when you judge between people, judge with fairness. Surely, good is what Allah exhorts you with. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [58]

O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is good, and the best at the end. [59]

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

The first of the two verses cited above was revealed in the background of a particular event which related to the custodial service of the Ka'bah, an office of great honour even before the advent of Islam. Those who were appointed to serve the House of Allah in a particular area of responsibility were regarded as people of great prestige and distinction in the community. Therefore, different areas of services were distributed over different people. It was from the time of Jāhiliyah that, during the days of Ḥajj, the service of providing drinking water to pilgrims from the well of Zamzam was entrusted to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, the revered uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was known as Siqāyah. Some other services similar to this were in the charge of Abū Ṭālib, another uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Likewise, the custodial duty of keeping the keys to the House of Allah and of opening and closing it during fixed days had been given to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah.

According to a personal statement of 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah, the Ka'bah was opened every Monday and Thursday during the period of Jāhilliyah and people would use the occasion to have the honour of entering the sacred House. Once before Hijrah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came with some of his Companions in order to enter the Ka'bah. 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had not embraced Islām until that time. He stopped the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from going in, displaying an attitude which was very rude. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم showed great restraint, tolerated his harsh words, then said: 'O 'Uthmān, a day will come when you would perhaps see this key to the Baytullāh in my hands when I shall have the power and choice to give it to anyone I

choose.' 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah said: 'If this happens, the Quraysh will then be all uprooted and disgraced.' He said: 'No, the Quraysh will then be all established and very honourable indeed.' Saying this, he went into the Baytullāh. After that, says Ṭalḥah, when I did a little soul-searching, I became convinced that whatever he has said is bound to happen. I made up my mind that I am going to embrace Islam then and there. But, my own people around me vehemently opposed the idea and everybody joined in to chide me on my decision. So, I was unable to convert to Islam. When came the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called for me and asked for the key to Baytullāh, which I presented to him.'

In some narrations, it is said that 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had climbed over the Baytullāh with the key. It was Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه who, in deference to the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, had forcibly taken the key from his hand and had given it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

So he went into the Baytullāh, offered his prayers there, and when he came out, he returned the key to Ṭalḥah saying: 'Here, take it. Now this key will always remain with your family right through the Last Day. Anyone who will take this key from you will be a tyrant.' (By this he meant that nobody has the right to take back this key from Ṭalḥah) He also instructed him to use whatever money or things he may get in return for this service to Baytullāh in accordance with the rules set by the Shari'ah of Islam.

'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah says: 'When I, with the key in my hand, started walking off all delighted, he called me again, and said: 'Remember 'Uthmān, did I not tell you something way back? Has it come to pass, or has it not?' Now, I remembered what he had said before Hijrah when he had said: 'A day will come when you will see this key in my hand.' I submitted: 'Yes, there is no doubt about it. Your word has come true.' And that was the time when I recited the *Kalimah* and entered the fold of Islam.' (Mazharī, from Ibn Sa'd).

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb رضی الله عنه says: 'That day, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the Baytullāh, he was reciting this very verse, that is, (58) *إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا*. I had never heard him recite this verse before this.' Obviously, this verse was revealed to him inside the Ka'bah exactly at that time. Obeying the Divine

command in the verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah again and made him the trustee of the key, because 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah when he had given the key to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, had said: 'I hand over this article of trust to you.' Although, the remark he made was not technically correct as it was the sole right of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to take whatever course of action he deemed fit. But, the Holy Qur'ān has, in this verse, taken into consideration the nature of trust involved therein, and directed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to return the key to none else but 'Uthmān, although, that was a time when Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنهم had both requested that, since Baytullāh's offices of water supply and custodial services (Siqāya and Sidāna) were in their respective charge, this service of the Key-Bearer of the Ka'bah may be entrusted to them. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم preferred to follow the instruction given in this verse, bypassed their request and returned the key to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah. (Tafsīr Mazharī)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. At this point let us bear in mind an important rule on which there is a consensus. The rule is that even if a Qur'anic verse is revealed in a particular background, the rule laid down by it in general terms must be taken as of universal application and must not be restricted to that particular event.

Now, we can turn to the meanings and exegetic aspects of these verses.

The Holy Qur'ān says: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا**. It means: 'Surely, Allah commands you to fulfill trust obligations towards those entitled to them.' As to who is the addressee of this command, there are two probabilities: It could have been addressed to the general body of Muslims, or it could have been addressed particularly to those in authority. What is more obvious here is that the verse is addressed to everyone who holds anything in trust. This includes the masses and also those in authority.

The emphasis laid on fulfilling trust obligations

The functional outcome of the command in the verse is that everyone who holds anything in trust with him is duty-bound to see that trust obligations are faithfully fulfilled and that the rightful

recipients have in their hands what is their due. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has laid great stress on the fulfillment of trust obligations. Sayyidna Anas رضى الله عنه says: 'It must have been a rare sermon indeed in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم may not have said the following words:

لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ، وَلَا دِينَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ

"One who does not fulfill trust obligations has no Faith (*Īmān*) with him; and one who does not stand by his word of promise has no religion (*Dīn*) with him." (Reported by al-Baihaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*)

Breach of Trust is a Sign of Hypocrisy

According to narrations from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهم appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while describing the signs of hypocrisy on a certain day, pointed out to a particular sign which was: 'Give him an *amānah* and he will do *khiyānah*.' It means when an hypocrite is charged with a trust obligation, he will commit a breach of trust.

Kinds of trust obligations

Here, worth pondering is the Qur'ānic use of the word, *Amānāt* which is in the plural form. This is to hint that *amānah* (trust obligation) is not simply limited to cash or kind which someone may have entrusted to someone else for safe-keeping until demanded, which is the most prevailing and commonly understood form of *amānah*. The cue is that there are other kinds of *amānah* as well. For example, the incident mentioned earlier under the background of the revelation of this verse does not have any financial aspect to it. The key to the Baytullāh was not a financial asset. Instead, this key was a symbol of the office of the serving keeper of the Baytullāh.

The offices of authority and government are trusts from Allah

This tells us that offices and ranks of government, whatever they may be, are all handed over to the recipients as trust from Allah. Those who receive it are its *amīn* (trustees). This covers all officials and everyone else in authority who wield the powers of appointments and dismissals. For them, it is not permissible that they give any office or job or responsibility to anyone who is not deserving of it in terms of his relevant practical expertise or intellectual capability. Instead of doing that, it is incumbent on those in authority that they must make

a serious search for the most deserving person for every job, every office within the jurisdiction of the government.

Cursed is he who appoints somebody undeserving to any office

In case, it is not possible to find the most perfect person for an office, someone with the most desirable qualifications and capabilities, someone who combines in himself all required conditions, then, preference may be given to the one who is superior-most in terms of his capabilities and trustworthiness from among the many of those available.

In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: If a person, who has been charged with some responsibility relating to the general body of Muslims, gives an office to someone simply on the basis of friendship or connection of some sort, without finding out the capability or merit of the person concerned, the curse of Allah falls on him. Not accepted from him is any act of worship which he has been obligated with (*farḍ*) nor any of that which he offers voluntarily (*nafl*), all along till the time he enters the Hell. (Jam'ul-Fawā'id, p. 325)

In some narrations it is reported that whoever entrusts a person with an office of responsibility, although he knows that there is another person more suited and more deserving for that office, then, he has committed a breach of trust against Allah, against His Messenger and against all Muslims.

The chaos and corruption seen in many systems of governance these days is a sad consequence of ignoring this Qur'ānic teaching, as offices are distributed on the basis of connections, recommendations and bribes. The result is that undeserving and unmerited people usurp offices they are not fit to occupy, doing nothing but harassing millions of God's own people, and in the process, destroying the very edifice of the system.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إذا وسد الأمر إلى غير أهله فانتظر الساعة

"When the responsibility of affairs is placed under the charge of those who are not deserving of and fit for it, then, wait for the Day of Doom (that is, there is no solution for this chaos)."

This instruction appears in a ḥadīth from Kitāb al-'Ilm of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

To recapitulate, let us remember that the Holy Qur'an uses the plural form for trust obligations, that is, 'Amānāt', and thus gives the hint that trust obligations do not simply relate to property or other financial assets held in trust by one person on behalf of the other. Instead of that, it has many kinds, included wherein are offices of the government.

There is a ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: *الْمَجَالِسُ بِالْأَمَانَةِ* (Meetings are a kind of trust). It means that anything said in a meeting is a matter of trust restricted to it. Reporting and publicizing what transpired there without the permission of participants is not permissible.

Similarly, another ḥadīth says: *الْمُشْتَارُ مَوْثِقٌ*. It means: 'The consultant is a trustee.' It is incumbent on him that the counsel he gives must be, in his best judgement, most beneficial for the seekers of the advice. If he gives an advice which he knows is not in the best interest of the seeker of the advice, he has committed a breach of trust right there. Similarly, if someone confides you with his secret, it becomes an article of trust kept on his behalf. Disclosing it to anyone without his permission is a breach of trust. So, the present verse tells us to be very particular in fulfilling all such trust obligations as due.

It was just the explanation of the first sentence of the first verse which has brought us this far. Now, we proceed with the explanation of the second sentence of the first verse (58) which reads: *وَإِذَا حُكِمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ* وَإِذَا حُكِمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ (when you judge between people, judge with fairness). What is obvious here is that the mode of address in the verse refers to those in authority who decide cases of dispute. Taking their cue from here, some commentators have concluded that the addressee in the first sentence is the same as in the second, that is, those in authority. This does not take into consideration the leeway that exists here too, very much like it is in the first sentence, that is, the probability exists that both office-holders and masses are included in this address for the simple reason that among the common people at large the usual practice is to appoint a neutral arbitrator to judge and decide between disputing parties. However, there is no doubt that, at the first sight,

the addressees of both these sentences appear to be none but those in authority. Therefore, it can be said that their addressees are, primarily, those in authority; while, secondarily, this address is also directed at all those who are keepers of trusts, and who have been appointed to arbitrate in some case.

It should be noted that Allah Almighty has said: *بَيْنَ النَّاسِ* that is, "between people"; and not anything like, 'between Muslims' or 'between believers.' Thus, the hint given is that all human beings are equal in the sight of the decider of cases in dispute. They may be Muslims or non-Muslims, friends or enemies, or they may belong to the same country, colour, language, or may be from another country, differ in colour and speak a different language. Those who have been made responsible to judge between them are duty-bound to cast aside all these connections and give their decision guided by whatever be the dictate of truth, right and just.

Equity and justice guarantee world peace

In a nutshell, it can be said that the first sentence of this verse carries the command to fulfill trust obligations, while equity and justice have been enjoined in the second. Between the two, the fulfillment of trust obligations has been given precedence. Perhaps, the reason for this may be that the establishment of a system that guarantees equity and justice all over a country is just not possible without it. It means that those who hold power in a country must, first of all, fulfill their trust obligations, a bounden duty which has to be discharged correctly and properly. Consequently they must appoint only those to the offices of the government who prove to be the best of the lot in terms of their ability to perform the required job and in terms of their trustworthiness and honesty. In this matter, no backdoors should be opened by acting on the basis of friendship, relationships, connections, recommendations and bribes. If this is not done, the result will be that gangs of the undeserving, and the incapable, or hosts of usurpers and tyrants will take over all offices and entrench themselves. When this happens, those at the highest level of power and authority cannot, even if they genuinely wish to usher an era of equity and justice in the country, do anything about it. The whole thing will just become impossible because these very officials of the

government are supposed to be the functionaries of the government through which it acts. When these officials turn pilferers of the trust or are flatly incapable of performing the duty entrusted to them, how can equity and justice be installed in a system?

Specially worth-remembering in this verse is that Allah Almighty has, by equating offices of the government with the trust obligations, made it clear at the very outset that *amānah* or whatever is held in trust should be handed over, properly and duly, to the person who is its rightful owner. It is not permissible to dole out what is held in trust to some beggar or someone needy just out of pity or mercy; or, it is also not correct to give out something held in trust just to fulfill the rights of some relative or friend. This is about *amānah* as it relates to common trust holdings. Not too different from this are trust obligations seen in broader perspective. Very similar are the offices of the government on which hinges a whole roster of things that have to be done in the best interests of the masses of men and women created by Allah Almighty. These too are trusts. They too have to be returned. But, they must be handed over to those who are its rightful, deserving recipients, those who have the ability to do what is required of them, have the qualification, the capability, and are clearly the best of those suitable and available for this office, and finally, are clearly superior to those in line in terms of their honesty and trustworthiness. If this office is given to anyone else other than these, this will be deemed as a contravention of the Divine instruction, that is, the trust obligations will not have been fulfilled as is their due.

Giving offices of government on the basis of regional or provincial considerations is an error of principle

Furthermore, this sentence of the Wise Qur'an has removed the common error which has been adopted as a rule of law in many countries and constitutions of the world whereby the offices of the government have been declared as the right of the people of a country. Because of this error of principle, laws had to be enacted to guarantee the distribution of government offices on the basis of the ratio of the population. As such, every province or state of a country has fixed quotas. A person from another province or state cannot be appointed on the quota of one province, no matter how deserving and trustworthy he

may be and no matter how undeserving and evil-doing the man from the latter may be. The Qur'an has openly proclaimed that these offices are not rights to be claimed by somebody. Instead, they are trusts which can be given only to those who deserve it. They may belong to one province or the other, one zone or the other. However, there is nothing wrong in preferring to appoint a person belonging to the area where the government has to have an office. Actually, there may be many beneficial considerations behind it, but, the condition is that the essential ability and trustworthiness of the incumbent must be checked and found satisfactory before such an appointment.

State structure and some golden principles

So, from within the framework of this brief verse, some basic principles emerge. These are:

1. By beginning the first sentence of the verse with **إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرِهِمْ** (Surely, Allah commands you ...), it has been clearly indicated that the real command and rule is from Allah Almighty. All rulers of the mortal world are the carriers of His command. This establishes that the supreme authority, the ultimate sovereignty belongs to none but Allah Almighty.

2. The offices of the government are not the rights of the residents of a country which could be distributed on the basis of the ratio of population. They are, trust obligations placed on our shoulders by Allah Almighty which can be given only to those who are capable and deserving of them.

3. Man's rule on this earth can be legitimate only as a deputy or trustee. While formulating the laws of the land, he will have to be bound and guided by the principles laid down by Allah Almighty, the Absolute Sovereign, and which have been given to man through revelation.

4. It is the standing duty of those in authority that they should, whenever a case comes to them, give a judgement based on equity and justice without making any discrimination on the basis of race, country of origin, colour, language, even religion and creed.

After having enunciated these golden principles of state structure, it has been said towards the end of the verse that the counsel thus

given to man is good counsel, good as it can be, because Allah hears everyone. He observes the state of a person who does not have the ability to speak, not even the power or means to protest. Therefore, the principles made and given by Him are such as will be practice-worthy in every country, every age, always. Principles and orders made by human minds are restricted within the parameters of their environment. They have to be inevitably changed when circumstances change. So, the way those in authority were the addressees in the first verse (58), people at large have been addressed in the second verse (59) by: 'O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.'

'Those in Authority':

Lexically, *أُولِي الْأَمْرِ* (*uli'l-amr*) (translated here as 'those in authority') refers to those in whose hands lies the management and administration of something. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī the earliest commentators of the Qur'ān, may Allah be pleased with them, have said that *uli'l-amr* fittingly applies to scholars and jurists (*Ulamā'* and *Fuqahā'*) since they are the succeeding deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the proper regulation of religion is in their hands.

Then, there is a group of commentators, including Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, which says that *uli'l-amr* signifies officials and rulers who hold the reins of government in their hands.

However, it appears in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī that this expression includes both categories, that is, the scholars and jurists as well as the officials and rulers because the system of command is inevitably connected with these two.

A surface view of this verse shows three 'obediences' being commanded here - of Allah, the Messenger and those in authority. But, other verses of the Holy Qur'ān have made it very clear that command and obedience really belong to none but Allah - from Him the command and to Him the obedience. The Qur'ān says: **إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ** "The command belongs to none but Allah.' But, the practical form of the obedience to His command is divided over four parts.

Forms of obedience to Allah's commands

1. First of all come commands about something which Allah Almighty has Himself revealed very explicitly in the Holy Qur'an and which do not need any explanation - for example, the extremely serious crime of *shirk* and *kufr* (the ascribing of partners to the divinity of Allah, and disbelief); the worship of Allah, the One; the belief in *Ākhirah*, the life-to-come, and in *Qiyāmah*, the Last Day; and the belief in Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Last and True Messenger of Allah; the belief in and the practice of *Ṣalāh* (prayers), *Ṣawm* (fasting), *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage) and *Zakāh* (alms) as *farḍ* (obligatory). All these are direct Divine commands. Carrying these out means a direct obedience to Allah Almighty.

2. Then, there is the second part consisting of *aḥkām* or commands which needs to be explained. Here, the Holy Qur'an often gives a terse or unspecified command the explanation of which is left to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Now, the explanation or enlargement of the subject which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم takes up through his *aḥādīth* is also a kind of *wahy* (revelation). If these explanations, based on personal judgment, miss something or fall short in any way, correction is made through *wahy*. Finally, the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as it is in the end, becomes the interpretation of the Divine command.

Obedience to the Divine commands of this nature is, though, the very obedience, of the commands of Allah Almighty in reality, but, speaking formally, since these commands are not physically and explicitly the Qur'an as such - they have reached the community through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - therefore, obedience to them is academically said to be an obedience to the Messenger which, in reality, despite being in unison with obedience to the Divine, does have a status of its own if looked at outwardly. Therefore, throughout the Holy Qur'an, the command to obey Allah has the allied command to obey the Messenger as a constant feature.

3. The third category of *Aḥkām* or commands are those which have not been explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the Hadīth, or if they do appear in the later, the narrations about such commands found in the enormous treasure-house appear to be conflicting. In the

case of such *aḥkam*, Mujtahid 'Ulamā (scholars having the highest multi-dimensional expertise in religious knowledge through original sources) delve into the established texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah along with a close study of precedents and parallels offered by the problem in consideration, giving their best thought and concern to arrive at the appropriate rule of conduct while staying within the parameters of the imperatives of the sacred texts. This being so, the obedience to these rules is one and the same as the obedience to the Divine because it has been, in all reality, deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, when seen formally, these are known as juristic edicts or *fatawā* as popularly understood and are attributed to religious scholars.

Under this very third category, come the *Aḥkām* which are free of any restrictions from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In fact, here people have the choice to act as they wish. This, in the terminology of the Shari'ah is known as *Mubāhāt* (plural of *Mubāh* meaning 'allowed'). The formulation, enforcement and management of orders and rules of this nature has been entrusted with rulers and their officials so that they can make laws in the background of existing conditions and considerations and make everybody follow these. Let us take the example of Karachi, the city where I live. How many post offices should there be in this city? Fifty or hundred? How many police stations? What transit system will serve the city best? What rules to follow in order to provide shelter for a growing population? All these areas of activity come under *Mubāhāt*, the allowed, the open field. None of its aspects are rated *Wājib* (necessary) or *Ḥarām* (forbidden). In fact, this whole thing is choice-oriented. But, should this choice be given to masses, no system would work. Therefore, the responsibility of organizing and running the system has been placed on the government.

Now, returning to basics it can be said that, in the present verse, the obedience to those in authority means obedience to both '*ulamā*' and *ḥukkām* (religious scholars and officials). According to this verse, it becomes necessary to obey Muslim jurists in matters which require juristic research, expertise and guidance as it would be equally necessary to obey those in authority in matters relating to administrative affairs.

This obedience too is, in reality, the obedience to the *aḥkām* or commands of Allah Almighty. But, as seen outwardly, these commands are not there in the Qur'ān or the Sunnah. Instead, they are either enunciated by religious scholars or the officials. It is for this reason that this particular call for obedience has been separated and placed at number three and given the distinct identity of 'obey those in authority'. Let us keep in mind that, the way it is binding and necessary to follow the Qur'ān in the specified textual provisions of the Qur'ān and follow the Messenger in the specified textual provisions of the Messenger, so it is necessary to follow Muslim jurists in matters relating to jurisprudence, matters which have not been textually specified, and to follow rulers and officials in matters relating to administration. This is what 'obedience to those in authority' means.

Obedience to authority in anti-Sharī'ah activities is not permissible

If we look at verse 58 and the command to 'judge between people with fairness' along with the command to 'obey those in authority' in verse 59, we can see a clear hint to the effect: If the Amīr, the authority in power, sticks to 'adl (justice), obedience to him is *wājib* (necessary); and should he forsake justice and promulgate laws against the Sharī'ah, the *amīr* will not be obeyed as far as those laws are concerned. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: *لا طاعة لمخلوق في معصية الخالق*. Literally, 'there is no obedience to the created in the matter of disobedience to the Creator,' which means that such obedience to the created as makes disobedience to the Creator necessary is not permissible.

Another point which emerges from the statement: "And you judge between people, judge with fairness" (verse 58), is that a person who does not have the ability and the power to maintain equity and justice should not become a Qādī (judge), because "judging with fairness" is *amānah*, the great charge of the fulfillment of a trust obligation, something which cannot be guarded, defended and fulfilled by a weak and incapable person. Relevant to this is the case of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه who had requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he may be appointed as the governor of some place in the Islamic state. In reply, he said:

يا اباذر انك ضعيف وانها امانة وانها يوم القيمة خزي وندامة الا من اخذ
بحقها وادى الذى عليه فيها (رواه مسلم بحواله مظهرى)

"O Abū Dharr, you are weak and this is an office of trust, which may, on the Day of Doom, become the cause of disgrace and remorse, except for one who has fulfilled all his trust obligations, fully and duly (that is, he will be spared of that disgrace)." (Muslim, in Mazhari)

The just person is the favourite servant of Allah

There is a ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: 'The just person is loved by Allah and he is the closest to Him, while the unjust person is cast far away from the mercy and grace of Allah.'

According to another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his noble Companions: 'Do you know who will be the first to go under the shade of Allah?' They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know this best.' Then, he said: 'These will be people who, when truth appears, hasten to accept it; and when asked, they spend their wealth; and when they judge (between people), they do it as fairly as they would have done for themselves.'

The Proof of *Ijtihād* and *Qiyās*

Finally, let us now refer to the statement: **فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ** in verse 59 (Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger.)

This 'reverting back to Allah and the Messenger' takes two forms:

1. Revert to *aḥkām*, the code of commands as mandated in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.
2. If the textually-mandated *aḥkām* do not exist, the act of reverting back will be accomplished by analogical deduction (*Qiyās*) as based on their precedents.

The words of the expression: **فَرُدُّوهُ** (revert it back) are general, thus being inclusive of both forms.

Verses 60 - 64

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ

And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah. And had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from Allah and the Messenger sought forgiveness

words. [63] So, ignore what they are and give them good counsel. Those are the ones Allah knows what is in their hearts.

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion. [61]

But, how will it be when they will come to suffer a calamity because of the acts of their own hands, then they will come to you swearing by Allah, "We meant nothing but to promote good and bring about harmony." [62]

Have you not seen those who claim that they have believed in what was revealed to you and what was revealed before you? They want to take their disputes to the Taghut while they were ordered to reject it. And the Satan wants to mislead them to a remote wrong way. [60]

ان الذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
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 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾
 والذين آمنوا واتبعتهم اهليهم لم ينالوا الجحيم بل هم فيها محضون ﴿١٤٤﴾

for them, they would have certainly found Allah most-relenting, very-merciful. [64]

Verses previous to these carried the command to revert back to the mandate given by Allah and the Messenger in all matters. In the present verses which follow, the act of reverting to laws contrary to the Shari'ah has been censured.

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

There is a special incident behind the revelation of these verses, the details of which identify a hypocrite by the name of Bishr. He got into a dispute with a Jew. The Jew said, "Let us go to Muhammad ﷺ and ask him to settle our dispute." But, Bishr, the hypocrite, did not accept this proposal. Instead, he came up with a counter-proposal suggesting that they go to a Jew, Ka'b ibn Ashraf and let him give a decision. Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a tribal chief among the Jews and was a sworn enemy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers. It was a strange coincidence that a Jew would leave his chief aside and elect to go by the judgement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while Bishr, who called himself a Muslim, would bypass him and elect to go by the judgement of the Jewish chief. But, there was a secret behind it. Both of them were certain that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم will give a judgement which is bound to be true and just. It will be free from apprehensions about any tilt or favour or misunderstanding. Since the Jew was on the right in this dispute, so he had more confidence in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as compared to his own chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf. Bishr, the hypocrite was in the wrong, therefore, he knew that the Prophet's judgement will be against him - even though he claimed to be a Muslim while his adversary was a Jew.

However, after some mutual cross talk between them, both of them agreed upon the option of going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requesting him to give a decision in their dispute. So, the case went to him. He made relevant investigation in the case which proved that the Jew was in the right. Consequently, he gave a decision in his favour. But, on the other side, there was Bishr, a pretending Muslim, who lost his case before him. He was not pleased with this judgement, so he hit upon a new plan - to persuade the Jew to somehow agree to go to

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه and have him give a decision in their case. The Jew agreed. There was a secret here too. Bishr was under the impression that Sayyidnā 'Umar is usually hard on disbelievers so he would, rather than decide in favour of the Jew, decide in his favour.

Thus, they both reached Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . The Jew told him everything about the incident and also narrated to him how the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had already given his decision in this case and that 'this man was not satisfied with it and had, therefore, brought his case before you.'

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه asked Bishr, "Is this what really happened?" He confessed that this is how it was. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said: "All right, you wait here, I am coming." He went into the house and came out with a sword which he swung to finish the hypocrite off, saying: "This is the decision for him who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم" (This incident appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās as narrated by Tha'labī and Ibn Abi Hātim).

Most commentators have also added that, following this incident, the heirs of the hypocrite thus killed filed a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه accusing him of having killed a Muslim without adequate legal authority as admitted by the Shari'ah of Islām. To strengthen their case, they submitted interpretations of his *kufr* (disbelief) in words and deeds in order to prove his being a Muslim. In the present verse, Allah Almighty has unfolded the reality behind the case, confirming that the person killed was a hypocrite, and thus it was that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was absolved.

Also reported are some other incidents of this nature where people had bypassed clear Islamic legal verdict to finally accept the decision of a soothsayer or astrologer. It is possible that the present verse was revealed about all such incidents.

The explanation of verses

The first verse (60) exposes the claim of those who say that they have believed in earlier scriptures, the Torah and the Evangile, and now believe in the Book (the Qur'ān) revealed to the Holy Prophet

Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . That is, earlier in time, they were a part of the community of the people of the Book, then they entered the fold of Islam and became a part of the Muslim community. The verse warns that this claim of theirs is simply a verbal camouflage for their hypocrisy. Their hearts are stuffed with the same old disbelief which has come out in the open during this dispute when Bishr, bypassing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , proposed that the Jewish chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf be the judge in that dispute and, in addition to that, later when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave a clear and just decision, he found it unacceptable.

The comment which follows immediately, employs the word, "Ṭaghūt" which has been left untranslated. Lexically, "Ṭaghūt" primarily means 'one who exceeds the limits.' In usage, the Satan is referred to as Ṭaghūt. In this verse, carrying the dispute to Ka'b ibn Ashraf has been equated with carrying it to the Satan. The reason could be that Ka'b ibn Ashraf was himself a satan personified, or it could be that bypassing a decision under the God-given law and preferring a decision contrary to it can only come from the teaching of the Satan. About anyone who follows this course, it is clear that he has virtually taken his case to the court of none else but the Satan. Therefore, right there in the end of this verse, there appears the warning that those who follow the Satan, the Satan will mislead them to a remote wrong way.

The second verse (61) tells us that turning away from the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , given under the dictates of the Shari'ah in matters relating to mutual quarrels and disputes, can never be the response of a Muslim. One who does it has to be a *munāfiq* (hypocrite). Thus, when the disbelief of this hypocrite was practically exposed through his dissatisfaction with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , his being killed by Sayyidnā 'Umar became all the more justified, because he no more remained a *munāfiq* (hypocrite) and, in fact, became an open Kāfir (or apostate). Therefore, it was said; 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed, and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.'

The third verse (62) exposes as false all interpretations advanced by

those who bypassed decisions given under God-given laws only to turn to decisions which were contrary to it. Their plea, in gist, was that they did not bypass the Messenger of Allah for any reason of lack of belief in the truth of his station and mission and that they did not prefer the decision of others over his decisions as if it was the ultimate Truth. Rather, they claimed, there were expedient considerations which led them to taking this course of action. For instance, one such expedient consideration was that, a case going to the Messenger of Allah would have meant that the decision would have been strictly legal, true and just - devoid of any options of mutual patch-up and tolerance (of 'other' factors not necessarily just). Naturally, articulating deceptively, they said they took the case somewhere else so that something good shows up for both parties through a mutual conciliation.

As evident, they came up with all these interpretations only when their secret was revealed and their wickedness and hypocrisy came out in the open and their man was killed at the hands of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ . In short, it was a consequence of their evil deed which brought upon them the disgrace or disaster of an accomplice killed, following which they started making statements on oath with all sorts of excuses and interpretations. Allah Almighty, in this verse, makes it very clear that these people are liars in their oaths and interpretations and that everything they have done, they have done because of their disbelief and hypocrisy. Their pattern of behaviour is that, when called to come to the Book of Allah and to His Messenger, they would turn away, all averse - which is no hallmark of a true Muslim. But they, as the verse says, would become all alert once they get into trouble as a result of their own evil deeds - like when the exposure of their breach of trust or hypocrisy brings shame on them, or when it leads to the killing of their man - then, they come to the Messenger swearing by Allah that they meant nothing but good. That they took their case to somebody else was not because they did not believe in the Prophet, or that they doubted the veracity of his judgement, but that their aim was to promote good and bring about harmony between the disputing parties.

The fourth verse (63) comes up with the answer. It says that Allah

is all-aware of the disbelief and hypocrisy rooted in their hearts. All their interpretations are false, and their oaths, an exercise in lying. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is being asked to ignore their excuses and reject their charge of excess against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, as the disbelief of this particular hypocrite had become manifest.

After that, towards the end of this verse (63), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to give good counsel to the rest of the hypocrites as well, in a way that may touch their hearts, that is, tell them to fear what lies beyond the present life and invite them to follow the path of Islam sincerely, or remind them of their likely worldly punishment in the event they stuck to their hypocrisy which might be exposed some day, some time, and they might as well meet the same fate as did Bishr, the hypocrite.

The fifth verse (64) begins by stating a universal Divine principle: 'And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah.' It means that any Messenger who was sent by Allah was sent so that everyone obeys the rules set by him in accordance with the will and command of Allah Almighty. In that case, the inevitable consequence will be that anyone who opposes the rules set by the Messenger will be dealt with in the manner disbelievers are dealt with. Therefore, whatever Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه did turned out to be correct. Following this appears an advice in the best interest of the hypocrites indicating that they would have done better if, rather than indulge in false oaths and interpretations, they would have confessed their error and presented themselves before him seeking forgiveness from Allah, and the Messenger too prayed for their forgiveness, then, Allah Almighty would have certainly accepted their repentance.

At this place, for the repentance to be acceptable, two things have been made binding: That they present themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and that he then prays for their forgiveness. Perhaps, the first reason is that they violated the great station of prophethood bestowed by Allah Almighty on His noble Messenger ﷺ and caused him undue pain by disregarding the decision given by him. So, in order that their repentance over their crime becomes acceptable, the condition that they present themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that he prays for their forgiveness was imposed on them.

Although, this verse (64) was revealed in the background of a particular incident relating to the hypocrites, yet its words yield a general ruling which stipulates that anyone who presents himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he prays for his forgiveness, he will definitely be forgiven. And 'the presence before the Holy Prophet ﷺ,' as it would have been during his blessed life in this mortal world, holds the same effect even today as the visit to the sacred precincts of the Mosque of the Prophet and the act of 'presenting' oneself before the blessed resident of the sanctified mausoleum falls within the jurisdiction of this rule.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه has said: "Three days after we all had finished with the burial of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم a villager came and fell down close to the blessed grave. Weeping bitterly, he referred to this particular verse of the Qur'an and addressing himself to the blessed grave, he said: 'Allah Almighty has promised in this verse that a sinner, if he presented himself before the *Rasūl* of Allah, and the *Rasūl* elects to pray for his forgiveness, then he will be forgiven. Therefore, here I am, presenting myself before you so that I may be blessed with your prayer for my forgiveness.' People personally present there at that time say that, in response to the pleading of the villager, a voice coming out from the sanctified mausoleum rang around with the words: قَدْ غُفِرَ لَكَ meaning: You have been forgiven. (al-Bahr al-Muḥīt)

Verse 65

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحْكِمَنَّكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِيْٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

So never, by your Lord, never shall they become believers unless they make you the judge in the disputes which arise between them, then find no discomfort in their hearts against what you have decided and surrender to it in total submission. [65]

Commentary

Not accepting the decision of the Holy Prophet is *Kufr*

This verse, while projecting a powerful view of the highly exalted

station of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , presents a very explicit statement concerning the need to obey him, something conclusively proved by so many verses of the Holy Qur'ān. The verse opens with the ultimate oath, "by your Lord", following which Allah Almighty proclaims that nobody can become a Muslim unless he accepts the verdict of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم willingly, calmly and fully to the extent that there remains even in his heart not the slightest strain because of this verdict.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is himself the exerciser of God-given authority over his community in his capacity as the Messenger of Allah and he is thus responsible for adjudicating in every dispute that may arise. The authority he exercises in making decisions certainly does not depend upon his being made a judge by some litigants. We should also keep in mind that Muslims have been asked to make the prophet their judge because people are generally not satisfied with judgements delivered by someone appointed by the government as compared with an arbitrator they themselves choose to have. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not only the ruler of a state, he is a Messenger of Allah, protected against sins by Him, and sent as mercy for the worlds, and also a loving father for his community - so, the compassionate instruction given is that, whenever a situation of conflict arises in social or religious matters, the contesting parties are duty-bound to make the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the arbitrator and judge and have him give the final verdict, and once the verdict has been given by him, let them all accept it whole-heartedly and act accordingly.

The Authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ extends to all times

Commentators say that acting in accordance with this command of the Holy Qur'ān is not restricted to the blessed times when he graced this mortal world. After him, the verdict of the sacred Law left by him, is nothing but his own verdict. Therefore, the rule reigns supreme right through the Last Day, the rule that guidance should be sought by turning directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his blessed life-time, and after him, one must turn to his Shari'ah which is, in all reality, a return to him, may Allah bless him for ever and ever.

Some problems and their solutions

1. To begin with, as already stated earlier, the rule is that a person who is not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in every dispute and in every problem or issue, is not a Muslim. As we already know, this was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar killed the person who was not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ following which he carried the case to Sayyidnā 'Umar for an alternate judgement. The heirs of the person killed went to the court of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar accusing him of having killed a Muslim without a valid legal reason. It is important to note here, and this has not been taken up earlier, that the following words, when the case was presented before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, came out spontaneously from his blessed lips: " ماكنت أظن أن عمر يجترء على قتل رجل مؤمن " (that is, I never thought 'Umar will ever dare killing a believing Muslim). This proves that the higher authority, when approached with an appeal against the decision of a lower authority, should not take sides with his subordinate authority, but should come up with a decision based on justice and fairness alone, as it has been illustrated above where the Holy Prophet ﷺ expressed his displeasure over the decision of Sayyidnā 'Umar - before the revelation of the verse had a bearing on this incident. Once this verse was revealed, the reality came out in the open that the person killed was not a believing Muslim as confirmed by this verse.

2. The second ruling which emerges from the expression: *فِيمَا شَجَرَ* (in the disputes which arise) settles that it is not restricted to dealings and rights alone; it covers articles of belief, ideas and many other theoretical problems. (al-Bahr al-Muhit) Therefore, given such a wide spectrum of intellectual and social activity, it is not unlikely that things could go to the undesirable limits of mutual differences in views and ways when confronting a certain problem. When this does happen, it is the duty of a Muslim not to continue mutual disputation, instead of which, both parties should revert back to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and when he is not with them personally, they must revert back to his Sharī'ah to search for the solution of their problems.

3. The third rule of self-assessment that we find from here is:

Doing something, which was provenly said or done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, with a heavy heart is a sign of weakness in faith ('*Īmān*). For example, there are occasions when the Shari'ah has allowed the performance of *ṣalāh* by making *tayammum* in place of the regular *wuḍū* with water; now, if a person feels uneasy and not so satisfied with the idea of making the symbolic *tayammum* in place of a regular *wuḍū* he would very much like to do, then, he should not take this attitude of his as a sign of *taqwā* or piety, instead, he should take it to be caused by some spiritual sickness. Who can be more *muttaqī*, more God-fearing than the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? If the form and condition in which he allowed people to perform their prayers while sitting - and he himself performed it while sitting - does not find favour with a person looking for the satisfaction of his heart, and he elects to undergo unbearable hardship by insisting to stand and perform his prayer in that position, then, he better be sure that there is some sickness in his heart. However, if a person, whose pain or discomfort or need is not that acute, elects not to use the leave (*rukhsah*) given to him by the Shari'ah and, instead of that, chooses to take the path of high determination ('*azīmah*) which is, then, correct in accordance with the very teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But feeling any strain in utilizing the leaves (*rukhsah*) granted by the Shari'ah as some sort of absolute rule is no *taqwā*. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّ أَنْ تُؤْتَى رِخْصَةً كَمَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ تُؤْتَى عَزَائِمُهُ* (that is, 'the way Allah Almighty is pleased with what is done with high determination, so is He pleased with what is done by using leaves.')

The best method of general '*Ibadāt* (acts of worship), *Adhkār* (plural of *dhikr*: the remembrance of Allah), *Aurād* (plural of *wird*: self-allotted voluntary recitations, made privately in specified hours of the morning or night), *Durūd* (prayer to Allah that peace and blessings be on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم), and *Tasbīh* (glorification of Allah) is no different than what used to be the routine of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and which was, after him, followed consistently by his noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. All Muslims must, as a matter or personal obligation, find these out from the authentic and sound narrations of ḥadīth so that they can make them an integral part of their daily routine of life.

Special Note

Details given above clearly show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not only a reformer and moral leader but was a just ruler as well, an authority of such class and majesty that his judgement was declared to be the very criterion of belief and disbelief, a distinguishing feature between 'Imān and Kufr, as evident from the incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. To make this prophetic station more explicit, Allah Almighty has, at many places in His sacred Book made the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mandatory along with His own due obedience incumbent on all believers. Thus, the Qur'an says: **أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ** (Obey Allah and obey the Messenger - 3:32; 3:132; 4:59; 5:92; 24:54; 47:33; 64:12). Then, elsewhere it says: **مَنْ يَطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ** (Whoever obeys the Messenger, he really obeys Allah - 4:80).¹

A little deliberation in these verses will unfold the radiant grandeur of his authority, a practical demonstration of which became manifest when Allah Almighty sent to him His Law so that he can decide cases in accordance with it. Therefore, it was said: **إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ** (that is, 'We revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by what Allah makes you see.')(4:105)

Verses 66 - 68

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ اخْرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذًا لَآتَيْنَهُمْ مِنْ لَدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَوَلَّهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

And if We had prescribed for them that they should kill themselves or that they should migrate from their homeland, they would have not done it, except a few of them. And if they had done what they were advised to do it would have been better for them, and more effective in making (them) firm. [66] And in that case, We would have certainly given them a great reward [67]

1. For a detailed treatment of this aspect, please see "The Authority of Sunnah" by Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

and we would have certainly led them to a straight path. [68]

The present verses and those appearing immediately earlier were revealed in the background of an incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. As we already know, he had first proposed Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, the Jew as the adjudicator of his dispute, but, later on, mutual discussions forced him to go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for this purpose. Since the judgement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was against him, he did not accept it and went to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه for a totally fresh decision.

When the news of this incident got around in the city of Madīnah, the Jews chided Muslims by saying: 'What sort of people you really are? Here you are believing in a Messenger of Allah and claiming to follow him, yet you do not accept his decisions! Look, in order that their repentance be accepted, the Jews were commanded to kill each other. This was a severe command, but we obeyed it, so much so that seventy thousand of our people were killed. If you were given a command like that, what would you have done?' Thereupon, the verse: وَكَرَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And if We had prescribed for them ...) was revealed. It means: If these hypocrites, or all common people, disbelievers or believers, were charged with some severe command, such as that of self-killing or migration like the Banī Isrā'īl were ordered to do, very few of them would have, being what they are, obeyed this command.

On the one hand, there is a stern warning here for people who try to seek the solutions of their disputes, not from the Messenger of Allah, or not from the Law and Way of the Messenger of Allah, but take it elsewhere. On the other hand, it answers the chiding of the Jews because this state of affairs fits the hypocrites and certainly not those who are firm in their faith as true Muslims. This is proved by what happened when this verse was revealed. Someone from among the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said: 'Allah did not put us through this trial.' When this statement was relayed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said: 'There are people in my community in whose heart Faith is entrenched firm like mountains.' Ibn Wahab says that this statement was made by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه .

According to another narration, when Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه heard this verse, he said: 'Had this command been prescribed, by God, I would have been the first to sacrifice myself and my family to obey it.'

According to some other narrations, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If this command to self-kill or migrate had come from Allah, Umm 'Abd (meaning Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه) would have definitely acted accordingly.' As for migration, the noble Companions acted faithfully and selflessly when they left their homes in Makkah, left their properties and businesses, and migrated to Madīnah.

Towards the end of the verse (66), it has been said that, difficult though it may seem, yet doing so in obedience to their Lord's command would turn out to be better for them in the end. This will make their faith more firm, bringing a great reward from Allah, and the blessing of being guided to the straight path.

This great reward promised here in the end of verse 67 for those who obey Allah and His Messenger has been described immediately after in verses 69 and 70 which follow with detailed explanations of the promised ranks.

Verses 69 - 70

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
 مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ
 رَفِيقًا ﴿٦٩﴾ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Siddiqīn*¹, the *Shuhadā'*², and the righteous - and

1. *Siddiq*, lexically means 'very truthful'. In the Islamic terminology, it normally refers to those Companions of a prophet who excel all others in their submission to Allah and His Messenger. They enjoy the highest status of piety after the Prophets, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه.
2. *Shuhadā'* (pl. of *Shahīd*) means the persons who sacrificed their lives in the way of Allah. The word has not been translated here by the word 'martyr' which sometimes is taken as an equivalent of *Shahīd*, because the word 'martyr' is also applied for the persons killed in ethnic or racial wars while they may not be termed as '*Shuhadā'*' in the Islamic terminology.

what a good company they are. [69] That grace is from Allah and Allah is sufficient being the One who knows.

[70]

In the verses appearing immediately earlier, the promise of a great reward was made to special addressees. What appears in the present verses is a universal promise that those who obey Allah and His Messenger shall be rewarded as a standing rule.

Commentary:

Deeds will be the criterion in ranks of Paradise

Those who do everything Allah and His Messenger have asked them to do and stay away from everything Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, shall receive different ranks in terms of their deeds. The foremost among them will be blessed with the highest stations of Paradise alongwith the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. Next to them will come those who will be blessed with the rank of those who are only next to prophets. They are known as the *Siddiqin*, that is, the great Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came forward to believe in the very initial stage without any hesitation or hostility, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr. Then, there will be a third rank of people who will be with the noble *Shuhadā'*. The *Shuhadā'* are people who sacrificed their lives and wealth in the way of Allah. Then, those in the fourth rank will be with the revered Righteous. The *Ṣāliḥīn* or the Righteous are people who restrict themselves, outwardly and inwardly, to doing only what is good and right.

In short, all those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be in the company of those who are the most exalted and the most favoured in the sight of Allah Almighty and who have been identified here under four ranks: Prophets, *Siddiqīn*, *Shuhadā'* and *Ṣāliḥīn* (righteous).

The Background of Revelation

This verse was revealed in the background of a special event which has been reported by the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr as based on several sound authorities.

It so happened, narrates Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, that a Companion came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one day and said to

him: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, I hold you dear, dearer than my own life, even more than my wife and more than my children. There are times when I do not seem to be at peace with myself even in my house until I come to you and have the pleasure of looking at you. That finally gives me the peace I missed. Now, I am worried about the time when you will leave this mortal world and I too will be taken away by death. In that case, what I know for sure is that you will be in Paradise with the blessed prophets housed in its most exalted stations. As for myself, first of all, I just do not know whether or not I shall be able to reach Paradise. Even if I do reach there, the level where I shall be will be way below from where you are. If I am unable to visit you and have the pleasure of seeing you there, how am I going to put this impatient heart of mine at rest?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم quietly heard what he said, but made no response, until came the revelation of this particular verse (69):

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشَّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ (٦٩)

It was only then that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave him the glad tidings that the obedient ones shall have occasions to meet with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn*, the *Shuhadā* and the righteous. In other words, despite the relative precedence of ranks in Paradise, there will be occasions of meeting and sitting together.

Some forms of 'meeting' in Paradise

One such form will be that people will see each other from where they are, as it has been reported in Mu'aṭṭā of Imām Mālik on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The inmates of Paradise will see those in the strata above them like you see stars in the physical world.'

Also there will be yet another form when visits will be made to the strata where they are, as Ibn Jarīr has reported on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Rabī' that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while explaining this verse, said: 'Those of the strata above will come down to those of the strata below to meet and sit with them.'

It is also possible that those of the strata below have the permission to visit and meet those of the higher strata, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, on the basis of this verse, given many people the glad tidings of being with him in the Paradise.

It appears in Sahīh Muslim that Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Aslamī رضى الله عنه used to spend nights in the company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. At the time of *Tahajjud* on one of such nights, Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī brought water for *wuḍū*, the *miswāk* and other things he might need at that time. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, quite pleased with him, said: 'Is there anything I can do for you? Go ahead, ask.' Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī said: 'I wish to have your company in Paradise.' He said: 'Anything else?' Sayyidnā Ka'b said: 'Nothing else.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If you want to be with me in Paradise, then "أعنى على نفسك بكثرة السجود" (literally - 'help me by taking upon yourself the doing of plenty of prostrations'). The elegant prophetic expression means that 'your wish shall be granted, but you can also help me in this by offering plenty of prostrations (*sujūd*, *sajdah*) that is, plenty of voluntary prayers (*nawāfil*).

According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, a man came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I have testified that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, and that you are the true Messenger of Allah, and I dutifully perform the five prescribed prayers every day, pay the *Zakāh* due on me and fast during the month of *Ramaḍān*.' Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Anyone who dies in this state will be with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn* and the *Shuhadā'* - only if he does not disobey his parents.'

Similarly, there is another ḥadīth from Tirmidhī in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: *التاجر الصدوق الأمين مع النبيين*: *وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشَّهَدَاءَ* (The businessman who is truthful and trusty will be with the prophets and the *Ṣiddiqīn* and the *Shuhadā'*).

Love is the *sine qua non* of Nearness

The blessed company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم can be acquired by loving him. This is conclusively proved by what has been reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* on the authority of many uninterrupted chains of narrations from a large body of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he, on being asked as to what will be the status

of a person who does belong to a group emotionally but fails to achieve the standards of deeds set by it, said: *أَلَزِمَ مَعَهُ مَنْ أَحَبَّ*, that is, (on the Day of Resurrection) everyone will be with the ones whom he loves.

Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه says that the Noble Companions were never so pleased with anything else in this mortal world as they were when they heard this hadīth, because it gave them the most wonderful news, a delightful prophecy indeed, that those who love the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be with their noble master on the plains of Resurrection and in the gardens of Paradise.

The company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to any colour or race

In al-Mu'jīm al-Kabīr al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that an Ethiopian came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, may His blessings be upon you, not only that you are distinct from us in the beauty of your physique and the colour of your skin but you also have the distinction of being a prophet and messenger of Allah. Now, if I were to believe in what you believe and do what you do, can I too have the honour of being with you in the Paradise?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Definitely yes (forget about your being black). I swear by the Power whose hands hold my life that all members of the black race will become fair and beautiful in Paradise radiating in their presence from a distance which might take a thousand years to cover. Then, Allah takes upon Himself the success and salvation of a person who says and believes in *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ* (There is no god but Allah) and a person who recites *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ* (*Subhānallāhi wa biḥamdihī*: 'Pure is Allah and praised is He') has one hundred and twenty four thousand virtues written in his Book of Deeds.'

Hearing this, someone present there said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, when Allah is generous in giving such enormous awards on such minor good deeds, how can we ever perish or be punished?' He said: '(That is not the point), the truth is that some people will come up on the Day of Doom with so many virtues and good deeds, so many that, should all these be placed on a mountain, even the mountain would find their weight too heavy to hold. But, when they are compared to the blessings from Allah (bestowed on them in the worldly life), man's deeds

and virtues remain no match to them - unless Allah Almighty Himself elects to be generous and merciful to him.

It was this question and answer with the Ethiopian brother which caused the revelation of the following verse of Sūrah Ad-Dahr: هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا (that is, man has indeed been through a period of time being nothing - 76:1). Surprised, the Ethiopian gentleman asked: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, will my eyes be seeing the same blessing which your blessed eyes will be witnessing?'

He said: 'Definitely yes.' Hearing this, the newly converted Muslim from Ethiopia started weeping and so much so that he died in that very state - weeping his heart out. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last rites, bathing and shrouding and offering *ṣalātul-janāzah* and burial, all with his own blessed hands.

Ranks of Paradise: Some details

Now that we have gone through an explanation of the verse, including the background of its revelation and related clarifications, the only thing that remains to be determined is the nature of the four ranks of people blessed by Allah. We have to find out as to what is the basis on which these ranks have been established, how they are interconnected and how are they different from each other, and whether or not can these converge into one person.

Commentators have written in great details about this subject. Some say that all these four ranks can be found in one person. According to them, all these attributes are overlapping because the one identified as 'prophet' in the Holy Qur'an has also been called by the title of '*ṣiddīq*'. For example, it has been said about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا : (Surely, he was a man of truth, a prophet - 19:41); and about Sayyidnā Yahyā عليه الصلوة والسلام وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ : (and a prophet from among the righteous - 3:39); and similarly, about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه الصلوة والسلام وَكَلَّمَآءٍ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ : (and he shall speak to the people in the cradle) 'as well as in middle age, and shall be one of the righteous' - 3:46.

The outcome is that, though these four attributes and ranks are distinct in terms of meaning and sense, yet it is possible to find all these combined in one person. Let us take an example to illustrate the

proposition. Religious scholars, the 'ulamā' are identified by their attributions, such as a Mufassīr (commentator of the Holy Qur'ān), a Muḥaddith (scholar of ḥadīth), a Faqīh (Muslim jurist), a Muwarrikh (historian). But, there could be some scholars who may combine in their person the excellence of all these fields. In our own time, when the trend is towards inter-disciplinary education and training, it is not so difficult to conceive the convergence of the attributes of a doctor, an engineer and a pilot, all in one person:

However, in accordance with commonly recognized practice, a person gets to be identified with an attribute which comes to take a dominating position in his life-work because of which such a person is usually associated with that particular field. It is for this reason that commentators generally take 'Ṣiddiqīn' to mean the most illustrious Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Shuhada' to mean the martyrs of the battle of Uḥud and Ṣāliḥīn as signifying the general run of righteous Muslims.

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has determined that all these four ranks are different. The same things find mention in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Mazḥarī. The sense of this approach is that Allah Almighty has, in this verse classified true Muslims in four categories or ranks and for each He has appointed stations of precedence, and common Muslims have been induced to see that they do not lag far behind in their efforts to achieve the rankings of any of these ideal ones. Waging the best of their intellectual and practical struggle, they must do the best they can to reach such stations of excellence. However, the station of prophethood is something which can never be acquired by effort and struggle, but there is something one still gets to have and that is the company of the prophets. Imām Rāghib says that the highest among these ranks is that of the prophets, may peace be upon them. They enjoy the support of the Divine power. They are like someone who is seeing something from a close range. Therefore, Allah Almighty has said about such people: *أَتَصْرَفُونَ عَلَىٰ مَا بَرَأَ* (Do you argue with him over what he sees? - 53:12).

The definition of the Ṣiddiqīn

The second rank is that of the Ṣiddiqīn. These are people close to the blessed prophets in the quality of spiritual excellence. They are

like someone seeing something from a distance. Somebody asked Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه : 'Have you seen Allah Almighty?' He said: 'I cannot worship something I have not seen.' Then, he further said: 'Though people have not seen Allah Almighty with their eyes, but their hearts have seen Him through the realities of faith.' By his act of 'seeing', Sayyidnā 'Alī meant the kind of sighting he has referred to later, for such intellectual or intuitive perception is like seeing.

The definition of the Shuhadā'

The third rank is that of the Shuhadā'. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through the chain of reasons and proofs. They have no access to direct vision, that is, *mushāhada* is what they miss. They are like someone seeing something in a mirror from a close range - very similar to what Sayyidnā Hārithah رضى الله عنه said: 'I feel I am seeing the Throne of my most sublime Lord.'

The expression أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَن تَرَاهُ (That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him) in the famous ḥadīth may also be interpreted to mean this very kind of 'seeing'.

The definition of the Ṣāliḥīn

The third rank is that of the Ṣāliḥīn. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through following the precepts of Shari'ah. It is like someone sees something in a mirror from a distance. In the other part of the famous ḥadīth quoted above: فَإِن لَّمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ (And if you cannot see Him, then, He sees you anyway) the reference may be to this very level of 'seeing'. In short, this investigative approach taken by Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī shows that all these ranks are ranks that reflect the quantum of knowledge one has of His Lord, and that the different gradations that are there are based on the respective rankings of this knowledge. As for the subject of the verse, it is clear enough. Here, all Muslims have been given the glad tidings that those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be with those who hold higher ranks in Paradise. May Allah Almighty bless us all with this love. *Āmīn*.

Verses 71 - 74

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ أَوْ ائْفِرُوا

جَمِيعًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَيُبَطِّئَنَّ فَإِنْ أَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ
 قَالَ قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ
 أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ
 مَوَدَّةٌ لَّيَلَّتْنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلْيُقَاتِلْ
 فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ
 يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا
 عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٤﴾

O those who believe, take your precautions and march in groups or march off all together. [71] And among you there is one who shall invariably fall back; then, if some calamity befalls you, he would say, "Allah has been so generous to me since I was not present with them." [72] And if there comes to you some bounty from Allah, he shall be saying - as if there was no friendship between you and him - "O that I would have been with them, then, I would have achieved a great success." [73] So, those who sell the worldly life for the Hereafter should fight in the way of Allah. And whoever fights in the way of Allah then gets killed or prevails, to him We shall give a great reward. [74]

Before this, there was the command to obey Allah and His Messenger. Now, in the present verses, Jihād has been prescribed for the obedient and faithful so that they can vitalize their Faith and raise the word of Allah high and supreme. (Qurtubi)

Commentary

Important Notes

In the first part of the verse: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ الع (O those who believe, take your precautions ...), appears the command to ensure the supply of weapons, while the later part refers to the launching of Jihād action. This tells us two things right away. Firstly, as already clarified at several places, the act of getting together functional means to achieve a good purpose is not contrary to *tawakkul* or trust in God. Secondly, we see that the text limits itself to the command to ensure

the supply of weapons, but it does not promise that, because of this support, Muslims will have any guaranteed security against their enemies. By doing so, it has been indicated that the choice of using means is for nothing but a certain peace of mind, otherwise, the use of means as such does not carry any operational gain or loss. The Qur'an has said: *قُلْ لَنْ يُغِيْبَنَا اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا* (O Prophet) say: "Nothing will befall us except what Allah has prescribed for us." (9:51)

2. Let us look at the first verse again. It opens up with the command to get ready for Jihād followed by a description of the marching plan; the later has been expressed in two sentences, that is, *فَانْفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ اَوْ اَنْفِرُوا جَمِيعًا* (... and march in groups, or march off all together.) Here, the word, '*thubātin*' is the plural form of '*thubātun*' which means a small group and is used to denote a military company and was called a Sariyyah in the military campaigns of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In that sense, it is being said here that Muslims, when they go out for Jihād, should not start off all alone. They should, rather, set out in the formation of small groups. The other alternative is to march as a large army: '*jamī'an*' because, in fighting, going alone is very likely to hurt --- the enemy is not going to let this opportunity slip out of their hands.

No doubt, this instruction has been given to Muslims for the particular occasion of Jihād, but, even in normal circumstances, this is what the Shari'ah teaches - do not travel alone. In a ḥadīth, therefore, a lone traveller is called one satan and two of them two satans and three of them become a group or party. Similarly, there is another ḥadīth which says:

خير الصحابة اربعة، وخير السرايا اربع مائة، وخير الجيوش اربعة آلاف

'The best companions are four and the best military company is that of four hundred and the best army is that of four thousand.' (From Mishkāt as reported by Al-Tabarānī)

3. Seen outwardly, the words of the verse 72 (... *وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ*) seem to suggest that this too is addressed to the believers, although the characteristics described later on cannot be taken to be those of the believers. Therefore, al-Qurṭubī says that they signify hypocrites. Since, they were the ones who used to claim being Muslims, at least outwardly. This is why they have been identified as a group from among the believers.

Verses 75 - 76

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تَقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ
الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ
لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ
الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out from this town whose people are cruel. And make for us from Your own a supporter, and make for us from Your own a helper." [75] Those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Ṭāghūt.¹ So, fight the friends of Satan. No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble. [76]

Commentary

Answering the call of the oppressed

Left behind in Makkah were Muslims who were unable to migrate because of physical weakness and insufficiency of resources. Later on, the disbelievers themselves stopped them from going and started hurting and harassing them in all sorts of ways so that they turn away from their faith in Islam. The names of some of these are preserved in exegetic works, for example, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and his mother, Sulyma ibn Hishām, Walīd ibn Walīd and Abū Jandal ibn Sahl, may Allah be pleased with them all (Qurtubī). These blessed people kept facing tyranny and torture because of their unflinching faith showing no signs that they would ever surrender their firm stand on Islam. However, they did continue praying to Allah Almighty for deliverance from this hard life which was finally accepted by Him when He commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against the disbelievers and rescue the oppressed from their coercion and persecution.

1. cf. Verse 55

According to this verse, Muslims had requested Allah Almighty the favour of two things - that they be rescued from that town (meaning Makkah) and that they be blessed with some supporter and helper. The fact is that Allah Almighty granted both these prayers when He provided some of them with the opportunity to move out from there which was the fulfillment of their first wish. However, some of them remained staying right there until the Conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā 'Attāb ibn Asīd as their caretaker and who had the oppressed Muslims delivered from their oppressors. Thus, granted was their second wish as well. It will be noted that the Holy Qur'an, rather than give a straightforward command to fight in this verse, has elected to use the words: مَا كُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ (What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah?). Here the hint given is that fighting and Jihād is a natural duty under such conditions, not doing which is certainly far from a reasonable man.

Praying to Allah is the panacea for all hardships

The words of prayer in verse 75: *يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا* tell us that one of the reasons why the command to fight came was the prayer made by these weak Muslim men and women. Allah Almighty responded to their prayer and commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against their oppressors and which put an end to their hardships immediately.

The objectives of war

Verse 76 says that *الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ*: 'those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Taghūt.' This clearly shows that the purpose for which a believer strives is to see that the Divine Law becomes operative in this world and that the authority of Allah Almighty reigns supreme, because He is the master of all. He has created the universe in His infinite wisdom, and His Law is based on pure justice, and when the rule of justice is established, there will be peace which sustains. In order that there be peace in the world, it is necessary that it is run under a law which is the Law of the Lord. So, when a true and perfect Muslim fights in a war, this is the purpose before him.

But, in sharp contrast to him, disbelievers seek to spread the message of *kufr*, give it the widest possible currency, and work to bring

about the ascendancy of disbelief. They are all too eager to see that satanic powers rule the world so that everything that constitutes *kufr* and *shirk* can be enforced in the universal order giving it the sheen and glamour of something seemingly positive. Since *kufr* and *shirk* are the ways of the Satan, therefore, the disbelievers help the Satan in doing his job.

The guile of Satan is feeble

The last sentence of verse 76: **إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا** assures that the deceptive plans made by Satan are weak and insubstantial because of which he cannot harm or hurt true Muslims in any way whatsoever. So, Muslims should really not demur when it comes to fighting against the friends of Satan, that is, against the disbelievers. This is because their helper is none other but Allah Himself and, with Allah on their side, the game plan of the Satan is not going to work for them.

And this is what happened at the battle of Badr. There was the Satan by the side of the disbelievers, dishing out his tall claims before them, telling them; **لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ** - 'this day, nobody is going to overpower you' - because: **إِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ** (I am your helper by your side. I shall be there with my armies to support you.) When the actual fighting began, he did advance with his army, but no sooner did he notice that angels have arrived to help Muslims, all plans he had made were frustrated and he took to his heels, saying to his disbelieving accomplices: **إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ** **إِنِّي مِنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ** (I bear no responsibility for you. I see what you do not see. I fear Allah for Allah is severe when punishing.) (Mazhari)

That the guile of Satan has been called 'feeble' in this verse (76) is not an isolated statement. There emerge two conditions right from this verse which provide us with an exception. The first one is that the person against whom the Satan is trying his guile must be a Muslim. Then, the second one is that the effort being made by that Muslim must be for the pleasure of Allah alone. In other words, he may not have any selfish motive behind his effort. The first condition emerges from the words: **الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** (those who believe) and the second from: **يُفَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ** (fight in the way of Allah). If either of the two conditions stop existing, then, it is not necessary that the guile of the Satan remains 'feeble' against him.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: 'When you see Satan, do not think twice. Attack him.' After that, he recited this very verse: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.) (al-Qurtubī)

Verses 77 - 79

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ
كُتِبَتْ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالُ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ
الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَدْرِكَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ
مُّشِيدَةٍ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ
تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا
أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنَ
نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

Have you not seen those to whom it was said, "Hold your hands (from fighting) and be steadfast in Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh." However, when fighting is enjoined upon them, surprisingly, a group from them starts fearing people as one would fear Allah, or fearing even more. And they say, "Our Lord, why have you enjoined fighting upon us? Would you have not spared us for a little more time?" Say, "The enjoyment of the world is but a little, and the Hereafter is far better for the one who fears Allah. And you shall not be wronged even to the measure of a fibre. [77] Wherever you will be, Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles." And if some good comes to them, they say, "This is from Allah." And if some evil visits them, they say, "This is from you." Say, "All is from Allah." So, what is wrong with these people, they do not seem to under-