

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 213-214)

From the book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,
by the Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir, the eminent jurist and statesman, Ata Bin
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﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ * أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزَلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ﴾

“Mankind was [of] one Ummah [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the Prophets (as) as bearers of good tidings and warnings and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path. (213) Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by suffering and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, “When is the support (naSr) of Allah?” Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near. (214)”

Allah (swt) clarified in these verses the following:

1. After Allah (swt) drove Adam (as) out of Paradise, sending him to the earth, people during the era of Adam (as) were accepting of servitude to Allah (swt) at first, by believing in Him, being one Ummah. Ummah here refers to a group of people with a single ‘Aqeedah (doctrine).

Subsequently they differed, with some of them remaining as believers, whilst others became disbelievers. So Allah (swt) sent Prophets (as) at specific times, determined by Allah (swt). The Prophets (as) gave glad tidings of Allah’s pleasure and paradise to the believers, on the other hand, they warned the disbelievers about the wrath of Allah and Hellfire. Allah (swt) sent the Prophets (as) with His Books of clear signs, that clearly distinguished good from evil for them, in order for the Prophets (as) to judge between them in all that they disputed over.

Within those nations who disputed over their Messengers (as), the most severe in disputing were their scholars, priests and monks. They were the ones who altered and replaced the holy Books revealed upon them, after conclusive evidence had come to them that distinguished Truth from Falsehood. That is, they adhered to the Falsehood which they committed, whilst knowing that it was Falsehood. In other words, they misled in knowledge, without evidence or clear proof. Instead, they were arrogant, stubborn, unjust and aggressive. As for those who were sincere to Allah (swt), who believed in what the Messenger of Allah (as) brought, they were the ones whom Allah (swt) guided to the righteous path. He (swt) ordered them to stay away from distortions and alterations, including by those who differed with their Messengers (as), so that the believers would not fall into sin and misguidance. Allah (swt) saved them from that, by His bounties and blessings. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ “And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight paths.”

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ﴾ “Mankind was [of] one Ummah [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners”. The statement of the verse is maHdhoof (subtractive) after the words ﴿أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً﴾ “One Ummah” i.e. they differed and some of them remained believers, while others became disbelievers. This subtractive meaning is indicated by the words ﴿مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ﴾ “as bearers of good tidings and warnings”. This is because sending Prophets (as) as bearers of both glad tidings and warnings means that they were sent to the people who differed amongst themselves, such that some of them deserved the glad tidings, whilst others deserved the warnings. This means that the people were one Ummah upon the Truth, but then they differed. So some of them disbelieved, whilst others remained true to their belief. This was their situation when Allah (swt) sent them the Prophets (as), bearing glad tidings for the believers and warning for the disbelievers.

﴿وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ﴾ “And sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed.” This is the indication that the Messengers (as) had codified Shariah in their Books, in order to judge upon the differences and disputes amongst the people. Allah (swt) said, ﴿لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً﴾ “To each of you We prescribed a law (sharia) and a method.” [TMQ Surah Al-Maida: 48]

﴿وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ “And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity amongst themselves.” ﴿إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ﴾ “Except those who were given it” i.e. scholars, priests and monks from amongst the people of the revealed Book, due to the indication of the verse ﴿مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ﴾ “After the clear proofs came to them”. They are the ones who knew the Books. The verse indicates that the most severely disputing were their priests and monks, because they replaced, altered and concealed the Truth, even whilst they knew.

﴿بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ “Out of jealous animosity amongst themselves” i.e. out of pride, oppression and stubbornness, without evidence or clear proof. The mention of the word ﴿بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ “Amongst themselves” i.e. jealous animosity (البغي) was deep rooted in them, as if it was with them wherever they went, present with them wherever they were present.

2. The first verse indicates the intense conflict between Truth and Falsehood, whilst there were Messengers (as) amongst them. Not only that, people of knowledge amongst them were the most disputing and the believers amongst them were few, as mentioned in the Hadith, “... يَأْتِي النَّبِيَّ وَمَعَهُ الرَّجُلُ وَالنَّبِيُّ مَعَهُ الرَّجُلَانِ” “There will come a Prophet with single man (on the day of Judgment) and another Prophet will come with two men.” [Bukhari 5311, Ahmed 3/58, Tafsir Tabari 2/8]

This means that the believers made their way in those corrupt societies with great difficulty and sacrifice. It is as empathy with the Messenger of Allah (saw), for he saw that his people and the People of Book from amongst Jews and Christians did not respond to the call of Truth brought by him (saw). Instead, they resisted him, confronted him, drove him out of Mecca and obstructed from the path of Allah (swt). They fought him in Medina, whilst gathering the people against him during the Battle of the Trench. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ﴾ “And hearts reached the throats” [TMQ Surah Al-Ahzab: 10]. So, the matter became severe, similar to what previous nations had done with their Messengers (as).

In the second verse, Allah (swt) clarifies that this is the Sunnah of Allah (swt) over His creation and the price for paradise is high; affliction with suffering, hardships and great calamities. It is like an earthquake with great intensity that made the Messengers (as) and those who believed with them speak of “When is the help of Allah?,” due to the severe burden of the tribulation. At that time, the support (naSr) of Allah (swt) came to them as the

support of Allah is near to those who are steadfast in truth, patient upon the affliction. At that time, the believers will rejoice with the support of Allah (swt), as if the servant was not afflicted before, as if he did not see the sufferings and hardships, for he sees only the blessings and pleasure of Allah (swt) as great. RasulAllah (saw) said, «يوتى يوم القيامة بأشد الناس» **“The most severely afflicted and tested person will be brought on the Day of Judgment and he will enter paradise. And he will be asked about the afflictions he faced in the world. He will be as if there were no afflictions in his life due to the greatness of blessings (he has on the Day of Judgment)”** [Ahmad: 3/253, As-Zuhd by Ibn al-Mubarak: 220, Ibn Abi Shaybah: 13/248].

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ﴾ **“Or do you think that you will enter Paradise?”** The word (أَمْ) ‘Or’ here is a word of discontinuity (munqaTi’ah), since the verse is the resumption of new sentence. The previous verse is ﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً﴾ **“Mankind were (of) one Ummah,”** but here the verse is ﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ﴾ **“Or do you think that you will enter Paradise?”** which is changing the form of address. Changing the form of address is due to the word (أَمْ) ‘Or’ which comes as a word of discontinuity. Calling the word one of discontinuity is more appropriate than calling it a word of conjunction (mutaSalah), due to the change in the form of address. Moreover, for (أَمْ) to come as a word of conjunction requires one conjunct, whilst it must be conditionally preceded by the Hamza istifham (i.e the particle أ), the particle of interrogation. This is like the saying (أعندك زيد أم عمرو؟) ‘Is (أ) either zaid or (أَمْ) Amr with you?’ i.e. which one of them is with you? The answer is Zaid, if Zaid is with you or the answer is Amr, if Amr is with you. As for (أَمْ) as a word of discontinuity, it occurs after an interrogative question (istifhaam) or information (khabr). Here the (أَمْ) of discontinuity does not come after a question, but after the information (khabr), which is separated from the sentence that follows. Thus the word (أَمْ) here is a word of discontinuity.

The (أَمْ) of discontinuity comes with the meaning of (بل والهزمة), which means ‘instead’ with the questioning particle (أ). So the meaning is, (بل أحسبتم أن تدخلوا الجنة)، ‘Instead, do you think that you will enter paradise?’ i.e. rejecting or ruling out the proposed notion. Thus, there is no entering of paradise, without affliction, as clarified by Allah (swt).

﴿وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ﴾ **“Until (such trial) has not yet come to you”** i.e. it has not come to you. The word (لَمَّا), ‘has not yet,’ has the meaning of expecting a negative outcome after it. It is different from the word (لم), ‘did not.’

﴿حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ﴾ **“Until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said,”** This indicates the severity of the hardship and tribulation, engendering horror to the extent that its burden and duration was not just felt by the general masses, but also by the Messengers (as) to whom the revelations were revealed, as well as by the believing companions who abided with them.

﴿مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ﴾ **“When is the support of Allah”** i.e. when will the support of Allah (saw) come? There is no doubt about the prolonging of the tribulation.

﴿أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ﴾ **“Ah! Verily, the support (naSr) of Allah is near!”** i.e. Allah (swt) responded to them through revelation to his Messengers (as) that the support of Allah (swt) is near. Starting with the particle of forewarning (tanbeeh)- (ألا)- and the particle of emphasis (tawkeed) -(إِنَّ)- grants tranquility in their hearts, that the promise will be fulfilled soon.

As for His saying ﴿مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ﴾ **“When is the support of Allah?”** i.e. when will the support of Allah (swt) come? It is as if they desperately long for the nearness of support (naSr), the answer came in accordance with the question, responding with forewarning and emphasis about the nearness of victory. ﴿أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ﴾ **“Ah! Verily, the support of Allah is near!”**