

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 146-150)

From the Book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,
by the Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir, the eminent jurist and statesman, Sheikh
Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah:

﴿الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ * الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ * وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٍ هُوَ مُوَلِّئُهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ * وَمَنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ * وَمَنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تُمِنِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾

“(146. Those to whom We gave the Book (Jews and Christians) recognise him (Muhammad) as they recognize their sons. But verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it i.e., the descriptions of Muhammad which are written in the Tawrah and the Injil).

(147. This is the truth from your Lord. So be you not one of those who doubt).

(148. For every nation there is a direction to which they face (in their prayers). So hasten towards all that is good. Wheresoever you may be, Allah will bring you together (on the Day of Resurrection). Truly, Allah is able to do all things.)

(149. And from wheresoever you start forth (for prayers), turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah), that is indeed the truth from your Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.)

(150. And from wheresoever you start forth (for prayers), turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah), and wheresoever you are, turn your faces towards it (when you pray) so that men may have no argument against you except those of them that are oppressors, so fear them not, but fear Me! And so that I may complete My blessings on you and that you may be guided.)” [Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 146-150]

Allah (swt) clarifies in these Ayaat the following:

1. The Jewish rabbis and the Christian priests know that Muhammad (saaw) is the Prophet promised in their Books. They know that as surely as they know their own sons. However, a group of them conceal the truth, through stubbornness and obstinacy. ﴿آتَيْنَاهُمْ﴾ “Those to whom We gave the Book” means their rabbis and their priests i.e. their scholars with the Contextualization (قرينة Qareenah) of ﴿يَعْرِفُونَهُ﴾ “they know him” because knowing is confirmed by what is in their books. This is a Contextualization about what is meant by ﴿آتَيْنَاهُمْ﴾ “Those to whom We gave the Book”. Those that know of him are their scholars, for these have real knowledge, whereas their public have knowledge by imitation of their rabbis and their priests.

2. Here Allah (swt) mentions in an address to RasulAllah (saaw) that what they conceal is the Truth from your Lord i.e. of they know of you as they know their children - and this is what they conceal - though it is the truth from your Lord. So continue with this Truth because they disbelieve in you through stubbornness and obstinacy, not because they do not know of you, for this is established in their Books.

As for ﴿فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ﴾ “So be you not one of those who doubt” which continues

on from your being a non-doubter and that is because Forbidding (نهى *Na'hee*) from a matter linguistically does not at all mean that its possessor is so. This means the continuity of the state that he was in, for the sake of affirmation and confirmation. So, if it is said to the learned "*Do not be illiterate*" this means that you have confirmed that he continues in being learned. It does not mean that he is illiterate and so you are inviting him to learn.

So, the state of RasulAllah (saaw) before the Forbidding is **“that he is not of the doubters,”** so the Forbidding confirms that RasulAllah (saaw) continues on the state upon which he was in i.e. not of the doubters i.e. not from those who doubt.

This is similar to the saying of Allah (swt) addressing RasulAllah (saaw) **﴿فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا﴾** **“So do not be an assistant to the disbelievers.”** [Surah al-Qasas 28:86] as well as **﴿وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾** **“And do not be from the mushrikeen”** [Al-Qasas 28:87] i.e. continue in your being not an assistant to the disbelievers and continue in your being not of the mushrikeen, because the state in which RasulAllah (saaw) was in before the Forbidding was that he was not an assistant to the disbelievers and he not from the mushrikeen.

3. Then Allah (swt) tells us that each of the Jews, Christians and Muslims have a Qiblah to which they face. Allah (swt) calls us to compete in good works. The verse thus shows that no one is beyond Allah's capability. Everyone, wherever they may be, Allah (swt) brings them together on the Day of Judgment, rewarding them according to what they endured, so Allah (swt) is not incapable of anything, for He is able to do all things.

﴿أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا﴾ **“Wheresoever you may be, Allah will bring you together”** “Where” is the case of locality implying the meaning of condition, **﴿تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ﴾** **“you may be, Allah will bring”** is the action of obliging the condition with the meaning that Allah brings you from any place whatsoever in which you are and He is not incapable of anything.

4. Then Allah swt confirms in the last two verses to face the new Qiblah - Al-Bayt ul-Haram - during residence and travel.

As for **﴿وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ﴾** **“Wheresoever you may be”** and **﴿وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ﴾** **“And from wheresoever you start forth”** this repeated confirmation is to remove what effect there could be in the soul through abrogation of the First Qiblah after Salah towards it for a time, so it reassures the should and directs it to wherein is the command of Allah (swt) and you know that it is the Truth right and that Allah swt compensate for every act. Thus, He (swt) is not neglectful on anything rather he takes account of everything **﴿يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا﴾** **“The Day every soul will find what it has done of good present [before it] and what it has done of evil, it will wish that between itself and that [evil] was a great distance.”** [Surah Aali-Imran 3: 30]. Thus Allah (swt) does not overlook any thing. **﴿وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾** **“And Allah is not unaware of what you do”** [Surah Al-Baqarah 2:74]

5. As we stated regarding the previous Ayah **﴿فَدَرَى تَقَلُّبُ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ﴾** [Surah 2:144]. RasulAllah (saaw) made Dua to Allah (swt) that he directed him to face the Kaaba instead of Baytul Maqdis to eradicate the effects of the Arab mushrikeen, particularly the people of Makkah, and the false pretensions of the Jews. The Arabs had been saying that this Prophet contradicts the Qiblah of both his father Abraham and his people. The Jews were saying that the promised Prophet accepted the Kaaba and not Baytul Maqdis. Allah (swt) accepted the Dua of His Messenger (saaw) and made the Kaaba the Qiblah **﴿فَلَنُوَلِّينَاكَ قِبْلَةَ تَرْضَاهَا﴾** **“Surely, We shall turn you to a Qiblah (prayer direction) that shall please you”** [Surah Al-Baqarah 2:144].

Allah (swt) obliged the First Qiblah towards Baytul Maqdis and then after some years made the Kaaba as the Qiblah, according to the wisdom that Allah (swt) knows. It is possible that we can see something of the wisdom from reflecting upon these noble verses, particularly **﴿وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنُعَلِّمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ﴾** **“We made the**

Qiblah which you used to face, only so We know those who followed the Messenger (Muhammad) from those who would turn on their heels” [Surah al-Baqarah 2:143] as well as the Ayah ﴿لِنَلَّأَ يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْنَكُم حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ﴾ **“so that men may have no argument against you except those of them that are oppressors.”** Thus, we notice from reflecting upon these two Ayahs, two matters from this wisdom.

As for the first matter, it is: on the one hand, exposing the weakness of Imaan of those over whom Shaytaan found a way into them by suggesting to them that this change in Qiblah is evidence of the lack of sincerity of the this Prophet (saaw), so Shaytaan made the Imaan of these people confused and Allah (swt) exposed their state. On the other hand, it distinguished true believers, for they obeyed the command of Allah (swt), assured by both the honesty of RasulAllah (saaw) and that Allah (swt) is the Master of the command and He ordered him in Truth. So their being directed to Baytul Maqdis and then the Ka'abah is according to the command of Allah (swt) and his command is Truth without doubt or suspicion.

And this is the first matter we notice of the wisdom.

As for the second matter, it is to show the reality of those words of the disbelievers from the mushrikeen and the Jews, that they are saying nothing but controversy and stubbornness, and not appealing to Truth, as evidenced by their continued fabrications even after the change to the Kaaba. This is mentioned in the Ayah ﴿لِنَلَّأَ يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْنَكُم حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ﴾ **“so that men may have no argument against you except those of them that are oppressors.”** These oppressors from the Jews and the Arab mushrikeen who brought the first false pretensions went back to searching for other flimsy arguments in downright stubbornness. So the Jews went back after the change in Qiblah to saying ما تحول للكعبة إلا ميلاً "Nothing brought the change towards the Kaaba but inclination to the religion of his people and the love for his land and not obedience to his Lord." And the Arabs went back to saying إنه علم أن قبيلته الأولى خطأ وها هو عاد إلى قبلة آباءه "Indeed he that his first Qiblah is a mistake and we went back to the Qiblah of his fathers."

These are the aspects of the wisdom that we notice upon reflecting on the Ayaat of changing the Qiblah from Baytul Maqdis to the Kaaba and the other great aspects are in the knowledge of Allah (swt).

And ﴿الظالمون﴾ **“The oppressors”** are the ones who are putting things out of place, so accordingly they are arguing without an affirmative argument, only for the sake or prolonging argument and quarrel. Argument (حجة Hujjah) is the name given to all that conveys adversarial disagreement in the way of argument, whether the argument is valid or invalid as in the saying of Allah (swt) ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ﴾ **“And those who argue concerning Allah after He has been responded to - their argument is invalid with their Lord, and upon them is [His] wrath, and for them is a severe punishment.”** [Surah ash-Shura 42:16] and similarly in the saying of Allah (swt) ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾ **“O People of the Scripture, why do you argue about Abraham while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Then will you not reason?”** [Surah Aali Imran 3:65] so their flimsy speech was admitted within the ambit of argument because they conveyed it in the way of argument.

Then Allah (swt) concluded by saying that we must not be afraid of those who are looking for flimsy arguments to convey in rigid stubbornness, rather we must fear Allah (swt) alone for He is the master of virtue and grace. So we have put on the Clear Truth on both our Deen and our Qiblah and He (swt) silenced the tongues speaking against Islam and its Qiblah and He completed His grace on us and guided us to the right path ﴿وَلَا تَمِمْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ﴾ **“And so that I may complete My blessings on you and that you may be guided.”**