

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ
 شَتَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ؕ اَعْدِلُوا هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
 خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread) 5:8

O You Who Believe!

- Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing.
- And let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.
- Be just: that is next to piety.
- And fear Allah.
- For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

The connection of the verse with the preceding ones is clear and needs no elaboration. The series of the verses is addressed to the believers, pointing to some important matters, which affect them individually and collectively in both worlds.

The verse is similar to the verse 135 of the chapter “Women”, *O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice bearers of witness for Allah’s sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do.*

However, there is a subtle difference between the two verses. The verse of the chapter of “Women” forbids deviation from justice in bearing witness because of some low desires; the person loves the man for whom he bears witness because of some relationship or friendship, etc. and therefore, gives evidence in his favor in order that he might get some undue benefits. Conversely, this verse of the chapter of “The Table” prohibits deviation from justice while bearing witness because of hatred and enmity for the person against whom evidence is tendered; he bears witness against him intending to take some revenge from him and thus tramples on his right.

This difference of theme has brought difference of stipulations in the clauses of the two verses. The verse in the chapter of “Women” says: *Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah’s sake*; while this verse in the chapter of “The Table” turns restrictions around and says: “be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice.”

- The main purpose of this verse is to
 - restrain the believers from going against truth in bearing witness because of some enmity that the witness might be entertaining against the party concerned.
 - Therefore, the evidence is attached to justice,
 - meaning that one should observe justice while giving evidence;
 - the evidence should not contain even an iota of injustice, even if the person concerned is one’s enemy.
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- On the other hand,
 - evidence in favor of someone because of love or relation (even if it goes against the right) is not counted such a deviation from justice although in reality it is not free from injustice and deviation.
 - Therefore, the verse in the chapter of “The Table” enjoins bearing witness with justice
 - and it has been based on the order of being upright for the sake of Allah;
 - while the order in the chapter of “Women” enjoins giving evidence for the sake of Allah,
 - that is, without following base desires and it is based on the order of being upright with justice.

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

The translation of this verse contains the clear guidance of maintaining justice without fear or favour.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars
An Earnest Invitation unto Justice

This verse invites to establishment of justice. At first, it addresses the believers and says:

" O' you who have Faith! be always upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, ..."

After that, the verse points to one of the factors of deviation from justice, and warns Muslims as such that tribal hatreds and hostilities, or personal accounts, should not stand as a barrier in the way of the execution of justice and should not cause transgression over the rights of others, because justice is something beyond all of them. It says:

"...and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably..."

For the importance of the matter, it emphasizes on the subject of justice once more, and says:

"...Act equitably, that is nearer to piety, ..."

And, since justice is the most important element of piety and righteousness, for the third time, it adds as an emphasis that:

"... verily Allah is Aware of what you do."